DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 282 UD 035 628

AUTHOR	Reed, Winifred L., Ed.; Decker, Scott H., Ed.
TITLE	Responding to Gangs: Evaluation and Research.
INSTITUTION	Department of Justice, Washington, DC. Office of Justice Programs.; Department of Justice, Washington, DC. National Inst. of Justice.
REPORT NO	NCJ-190351
PUB DATE	2002-07-00
NOTE	322p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Criminal Justice Reference Service, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000. Tel: 800-851-3420 (Toll Free); e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org; Web site: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC13 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescents; Data Collection; Females; Homicide; *Juvenile Gangs; Program Effectiveness; State Legislation; Violence; Young Adults
IDENTIFIERS	Gangs; Massachusetts (Boston); Nevada; Risk Reduction; Risk Taking Behavior; Task Force Approach; Tracking (Cases)

ABSTRACT

This collection of papers presents a representative selection of the National Institute of Justice's portfolio of gang-related research. The 10 papers are: (1) "A Decade of Gang Research: Findings of the National Institute of Justice Gang Portfolio" (Scott H. Decker); (2) "The Evolution of Street Gangs: An Examination of Form and Variation" (Deborah Lamm Weisel); (3) "Young Women in Street Gangs: Risk Factors, Delinquency, and Victimization Risk" (Jody Miller); (4) "Youth Gang Homicides in the United States in the 1990s" (Cheryl L. Maxson, G. David Curry, and James C. Howell); (5) "National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training [G.R.E.A.T.] Program" (Finn-Aage Esbensen, Adrienne Freng, Terrance J. Taylor, Dana Peterson, and D. Wayne Osgood); (6) "Evaluating Nevada's Antigang Legislation and Gang Prosecution Units" (Terance D. Miethe and Richard C. McCorkle); (7) "Evaluation of a Task Force Approach to Gangs" (Susan Pennell and Roni Melton); (8) "Gang Prevention Programs for Female Adolescents: An Evaluation" (Katherine Williams, G. David Curry, and Marcia I Cohen); (9) "Reducing Gang Violence in Boston" (Anthony A. Braga and David M. Kennedy); and (10) "Developing a GIS-Based Regional Gang Incident Tracking System" (James W. Meeker, Katie J.B. Parsons, and Bryan J. Vila). (Papers contain references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

ED 475 282

[illegible]

Legislation

RESPONDING TO GANGS

Evaluation and Research

vention/

vention

grams

UD 035 628

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NIJ

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

John Ashcroft
Attorney General

Deborah J. Daniels
Assistant Attorney General

Sarah V. Hart
Director, National Institute of Justice

Office of Justice Programs World Wide Web Site *http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov*	National Institute of Justice World Wide Web Site *http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij*

Responding to Gangs: Evaluation and Research

Editors

Winifred L. Reed
Social Science Analyst
National Institute of Justice

Scott H. Decker, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Missouri–St. Louis

NCJ 190351

July 2002

NIJ

National Institute of Justice

Sarah V. Hart
Director

Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

Preface

This collection of papers presents a representative selection of NIJ's portfolio of gang-related research. The genesis was the upsurge in gang crime beginning in the mid-1980s, which prompted NIJ to expand research in this area.

NIJ's major focus is to generate research-based knowledge that can inform policy and be useful for practitioners. For that reason, the emphasis in this volume is on evaluations. An evaluation may indicate a program works or doesn't, but in either case the information can be applied by those seeking solutions to similar problems. The evaluation of Boston's initiative to halt youth gang violence offers hope that focused law enforcement deterrence works. The assessment of the G.R.E.A.T. program demonstrates that school-based prevention can have favorable results.

Police chiefs and local policymakers can use evaluation findings to help develop strategy and deploy resources or move in new directions. Not only were the studies in this volume launched with an eye to practice, but some are themselves the product of researcher-practitioner collaboration. Again, the Boston project is an example, with its partnership of local law enforcement and academics tackling youth homicide. Practitioners and researchers working together in Orange County, California, developed a system for tracking gang crime.

In NIJ research, collaboration plays a major role. Through the National Youth Gang Consortium, a coalition of Federal agencies, NIJ works to reduce youth involvement in gang crime. The Consortium is administered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), an agency with which NIJ has had a long and productive relationship in addressing juvenile offending. In addition to OJJDP, several other Consortium members supported studies in this volume, sponsored the programs evaluated, or otherwise contributed. This pooled expertise in different fields adds to the strength of the volume.

We are fortunate in having as editors Winifred L. Reed and Scott H. Decker. Dr. Decker is with the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Missouri and has been conducting research on gangs and related issues for more than two decades. His extensive experience is no doubt the source of his perceptive and forthright introductory comments. Winifred Reed, a Social Science Analyst with NIJ, has similar depth of experience, having managed the agency's portfolio of gang research for the past 10 years.

What's presented between these covers is not the final word on gang research. If we have learned a great deal, a great deal is still unknown. Working with practitioners and researchers, NIJ continues to identify knowledge gaps. The risk factors for gang membership are known, but are there protective factors? Are prison gangs related to street gangs? What can be done to encourage gang members to leave the gang? What is the role of the media and popular culture in the genesis and spread of gangs? These are only a few questions in a long list, and as Scott Decker makes clear in his elaboration on research gaps, the list in no way exhausts the possibilities.

This volume helps fill the knowledge gap with information that can be applied to operations. It suggests that through research we may achieve a degree of understanding that enables those in the field to maximize prevention, intervention, and suppression.

Sarah V. Hart
Director
National Institute of Justice

Contents

Preface ... iii

Chapter 1. A Decade of Gang Research: Findings of the National Institute of Justice Gang Portfolio ... 1

Chapter 2. The Evolution of Street Gangs: An Examination of Form and Variation ... 25

Chapter 3. Young Women in Street Gangs: Risk Factors, Delinquency, and Victimization Risk ... 67

Chapter 4. Youth Gang Homicides in the United States in the 1990s ... 107

Chapter 5. National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program ... 139

Chapter 6. Evaluating Nevada's Antigang Legislation and Gang Prosecution Units ... 169

Chapter 7. Evaluation of a Task Force Approach to Gangs ... 197

Chapter 8. Gang Prevention Programs for Female Adolescents: An Evaluation ... 225

Chapter 9. Reducing Gang Violence in Boston ... 265

Chapter 10. Developing a GIS-Based Regional Gang Incident Tracking System ... 289

Chapter 1

A Decade of Gang Research: Findings of the National Institute of Justice Gang Portfolio

Scott H. Decker, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Missouri–St. Louis

In 1983, sociologists Hedy Bookin-Weiner and Ruth Horowitz asked whether the end of the youth gang was "fad or fact." Although their concern was largely with the influence of politics and ideology on both the funding and the nature of research about gangs, the fundamental question regarding the "end" of youth gangs seemed a reasonable one. After all, the major gang "epidemic" of the 1960s had appeared to subside in most cities except, most notably, in Chicago and Los Angeles. Gangs had certainly faded from the research agendas of most criminologists, as shown by the lack of empirical and theoretical work using gangs as a focal point. But like many cyclical behaviors, including crime (Klein 1995b), gangs returned. And with their return came increased attention from the research community.

This volume represents one segment of the increased attention that gangs received during the past decade. That decade saw a dramatic increase in the level of funding for gang research. Federal agencies, led by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Administration for Children and Families and National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the U.S. Department of Education, have made substantial contributions to the expansion of knowledge about gangs, gang interventions, and the characteristics of individual gang members. The selections in this volume were funded primarily by NIJ. Although these are not the only federally funded projects in this topic area, they represent some of the more prominent and visible ones.

Bookin-Weiner and Horowitz suggested (1983: 599) that gang research, particularly work funded by Federal agencies, will be influenced profoundly by the dominant ideology of the time regarding crime, and that suppression has been the dominant ideology. It is important in this context to distinguish between the ideology underlying gang research and the ideology underlying gang intervention. Clearly, their suggestion was that suppression and deterrence strategies will be reflected in research and practice funded by the Federal Government.

One of the most influential federally funded research projects (Spergel and Curry 1993) documented that although suppression was the dominant response to gangs, it was perceived to be the least effective. Even among law enforcement respondents in that study, it was perceived as less effective than providing social opportunities through job training and education. In addition, as Malcolm Klein (1995a) noted, little serious evaluation research has focused on antigang suppression efforts, which suggests that the relationship among Federal funding, political ideology, and research findings is much more complicated than might be expected. Indeed, much of the gang research presented in this volume suggests that simple predictions from researchers *or* law enforcement are likely to be wrong. Research is not motivated by political ideology or a commitment to a particular outcome, but is conducted because there is a pressing need for information to guide decisionmaking.

The works collected in this volume reflect a diverse set of methodologies and substantive interests and range from field studies to surveys of classroom students to analyses of official records. Basic research issues as well as applied policy issues are examined. The volume includes field research, survey research, program evaluation, and records research. In addition, these chapters reflect an interest in gender, in minorities, and in improving criminal justice system interventions. Several researchers whose work is presented here have also used the platform of Federal funding to examine issues well beyond the scope of their initial grant, enhancing our knowledge of gangs as well as leveraging scarce Federal research dollars in important ways. In all, this is a broad-based collection of studies that will be useful to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. The impressive basic and applied work that appears here adds to what we know about gangs and may affect what we do about gangs. This research should help lay the foundation for the research and intervention agenda for the next decade.

This introduction summarizes the chapters that follow and offers a substantive, methodological, and policy response to each. The summaries attempt to place the research in the broader context of research on gangs, delinquency, and juvenile justice. The introduction then turns to an examination of areas of research that need more attention and concludes by identifying potential future directions and offering some methodological suggestions for gang research.

Summaries of the Research Projects

The best of the research projects in this volume combine a strong conceptual focus with a sound methodology. Because NIJ funded most of these projects, it follows that they have a singular focus on policy or program evaluation. What sets the best of these projects apart, however, is their breadth of focus, strong commitment to sound methodologies, and ability to identify both basic and applied research questions.

The dominant paradigm in research is that a basic or scientific research question must be identified. This leads to the choice of appropriate methodologies that attempt to rule out rival hypotheses, controlling for threats to internal and external validity. Data are collected, controls applied, and analyses conducted. This is the prototypical scientific model, in which theoretical questions guide research about basic scientific questions, which, in turn, produces findings that lead to policies, programs, or interventions. In the pure form of this model, a researcher would begin with a question about gang behavior derived from the literature, formulate hypotheses about how gangs and their members behave, and then test those hypotheses in various ways. Following several successful tests of the hypotheses, a second researcher or research team may decide to determine whether the basic research findings can change the behavior of individual gang members or gangs. This process, which may last several years or decades, may result in suggestions for program or policy intervention.

Unfortunately, however, such an approach is not feasible in practice. Policymakers simply do not have the luxury of waiting 10 or 20 years for an answer to the "gang problem." In many American cities, gang violence has so disrupted the social fabric of some neighborhoods that socialization, employment, and education can no longer work successfully. Without overdramatizing the extent to which this is true, one need only look at such cities as Chicago, Los Angeles, and St. Louis, where gangs are responsible for more than 25 percent of all homicides and assaults. The reality of gang violence has placed a significant amount of pressure on those who fund Federal intervention and research programs to "do something." The question, of course, is what to do. This volume documents many of the responses to gangs as well as some of the research about the impact of such responses (see exhibit 1).

Reducing Gang Violence in Boston

In a review of his tenure at the National Institute of Justice, a former director said that funding the research on Boston's Operation Ceasefire was one of the most substantive investments that the Institute had made during that time (Travis and Blumstein 2000). Anthony A. Braga and David M. Kennedy's "Reducing Gang Violence in Boston" (chapter 9) provides ample evidence to support that claim. As noted above, the strongest research combines a basic and applied focus with a strong methodology. The body of research on Operation Ceasefire has all of these attributes. Its strongest feature is its commitment to the problem-solving process. Braga and Kennedy

Exhibit 1: The Studies in This Volume

Researcher(s)	Site(s) Studied	Year of Award	Year(s) Data Collected	Data Sources	Topic	Whose Definition of "Gang"?
Braga and Kennedy	Boston	1994	• Problem description: 1995–96 • Evaluation: 1999	Official records, interviews, focus group sessions	Problem-solving to reduce gun violence—evaluation	Law enforcement
Williams, Curry, and Cohen	Boston, Seattle, and Pueblo, CO	1993	1993–95	• Process evaluation: project reports, interviews with staff, observations • Outcome evaluation: interview-based surveys of study participants	Girl gang prevention program—evaluation	Youths' self-reports
Esbensen et al.	Philadelphia; Omaha and; Lincoln, NE; Portland, OR; Las Cruces, NM Phoenix	1994	• Pretest: 1995 • Posttests: 1995 • Annual followups: 1996–99	Surveys of students	G.R.E.A.T. prevention program—national evaluation	Youths' self-reports
Meeker, Vila, and Parsons	Orange County, CA	1996	1994–98	Official records, interviews with MIS developers	Gang MIS development	Legislature and law enforcement
Miethe and McCorkle	Clark and Washoe Counties, NV	1994	• Official records: 1989–95 • Interviews: 1994	Criminal justice records, observations, interviews with criminal justice officials	Impact of gang legislation and gang prosecution unit—evaluation	Legislature
Miller	Columbus, OH; and St. Louis	1996	1995–97*	Interview-based surveys of youths	Gender and gangs	Youths' self-reports
Maxson, Curry, and Howell	Nationwide	1995	1992, 1997–99	Police survey data	Gang homicide, 1990s	Law enforcement
Pennell and Melton	San Diego	1991	1986–92	Criminal justice records, interviews with task force staff	Multiagency gang task force—evaluation	Law enforcement
Weisel	San Diego and Chicago	1992	• Police: 1995 • Gang members: 1996–97	• Police—surveys • Gang members— interviews	Gangs as organized crime groups	Offenders' self-reports and law enforcement

* Some interviews were conducted before the NIJ grant was awarded.

engaged a broad array of local, State, and Federal justice officials, as well as community and neighborhood leaders, in a data-driven effort to craft a more effective and efficient response to youth violence. This intense effort ultimately led to a focus on gang violence. Braga and Kennedy's dogged commitment to focus on data and analysis may be the longest lasting contribution of this research.

The early stages of this research had a stronger qualitative and descriptive focus, as would be appropriate in the early stages of a problem-solving model. As rates of gun homicide in Boston decreased, however, a new research question emerged: how to explain the precipitous and unprecedented decline in gun homicides. The research process addressed this key issue later in the project, providing time-series evidence that the intervention and the decline were indeed linked statistically. This illustrates another strength of the research: that it was flexible and farsighted enough to adapt to the project's emerging needs. The growth of the project over time, from its initial problem-solving focus on guns and youth, and its integration of divergent constituent groups are examples of how research can influence policy.

Braga and Kennedy's youth gang and youth violence research has also contributed to our conceptual understanding of deterrence. The search for the appropriate "levers" to pull to ensure compliance with criminal justice mandates remains a long-lasting addition to our knowledge about this process. Braga and Kennedy stress that the threat of criminal sanctions will not be an effective deterrent unless it reaches those individuals least likely to be reached by public messages. It is ironic that a project initially funded to understand and respond to youth violence and lead to a focus on gang violence has as yet provided less direct knowledge about gangs than about the process of addressing the broader issue of youth violence.

Gang Programs for Young Women

Among the many gaps in our knowledge of gangs, perhaps none looms larger than the paucity of research on young women and gangs. Two of the chapters in this volume address this crucial issue directly. Although we know too little about young women and gangs, we know even less about programming for gang girls. Katherine Williams, G. David Curry, and Marcia I. Cohen's "Gang Prevention Programs for Female Adolescents: An Evaluation" (chapter 8) attempts to address the second of these issues. The research presented here summarizes an evaluation of gang programming targeted to young women in

Boston, Pueblo (Colorado), and Seattle and supported by HHS's Family and Youth Services Bureau. The choice of these diverse cities served to maximize the variation in ethnicity among the young female gang members studied. For this reason, the results of this study should have been able to shed light on both process and impact issues.

The description of the research process is a textbook example of what can go wrong in program evaluation. The proposed randomization could not be fully implemented, the control groups of matched individuals could not be successfully constructed, the dropout rates in the control and program groups were large and unequal, the number of subjects in the program group was often too small for meaningful analysis, and the nature of the intervention changed from the initial plan. None of these shortcomings was directly the fault of the research team; indeed, the team had negotiated access to the programs and had fostered agreement among the agencies on a process of assigning individuals to control and treatment groups. In addition, the agencies were receiving Federal funding to support their programs, often a predicate for participation in an evaluation.

The research reported here is the result of both process and outcome evaluations. In the Boston and Seattle sites, few goals of the initial research design could be implemented because of low participation rates, high dropout rates among those who did participate, and the changing nature of the program. Despite these obstacles, the research team produced a process evaluation of those two sites that should be required reading both for those involved in program evaluation and for those who would fund such evaluations. It identifies the myriad factors in program design and delivery that can frustrate an outcome evaluation. The research produced an outcome evaluation of the program in Pueblo, and the results of that intervention were mixed with regard to the program's success.

This chapter leaves many unanswered questions about the state of programming for young women in gangs. Among the key questions that cannot yet be assessed are the following:

- What is the extent of programming for young women in gangs?
- Do female gang members need programming different from that for their male counterparts?

- Do female gang members need programming different from that for young women who are not gang members but are involved in other forms of serious misconduct and delinquency?
- Can programming for female gang members operate independently of other interventions for gang members?
- Can programming for female gang members operate independently of other interventions for young women who engage in other forms of serious misconduct and delinquency?
- Which types of programming are most successful in reducing the involvement of female gang members in serious misconduct and delinquency?

The chapter begins to fill in some of the gaps that must be addressed in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs targeted to young women in gangs. Unfortunately, such programs often have mirrored programming for youth in general, thereby preventing the research team from answering these questions and from providing firmer guidance to others interested in the answers.

Trends in Youth Gang Homicides

Few topics in the area of gang research have attracted as much attention as gang homicide. Past research has focused on the correlates of gang homicides, the definitions of gang homicide, trends in gang homicides, and the differences between gang and nongang homicide. Cheryl L. Maxson, G. David Curry, and James C. Howell have all made important contributions to the past literature on this topic, so their current work (chapter 4 in this volume) is a welcome addition to an already large body of literature. Given the already impressive body of knowledge on gang homicide—much of it produced by these three coauthors—can anything new be said on the subject? The answer is a resounding yes.

"Youth Gang Homicides in the United States in the 1990s" carefully examines three issues of critical importance to the understanding of gang homicide: measurement, trends, and correlates. The measurement issue, as Maxson and her colleagues demonstrate, is central to understanding gang homicide and gang crime in general. Depending on whether one applies a "gang membership" definition (as the Los Angeles Police Department does) or a "gang motivated" definition (as the Chicago Police Department does), one ends up with estimates of the volume of gang crime that are "twice as great" or "half as great" (Maxson and Klein 1990; Maxson, Gordon, and Klein 1985). Since respondents to the National Youth Gang Center's (NYGC's) annual survey (which the authors used as a data source) are given guidance on which crimes are to be classified as gang crimes, there is reason to believe that the data have at least some validity.

Yet this chapter also stresses that even such guidance does not always result in valid estimates of the number of gang homicides. The authors compare NYGC estimates with estimates found by other researchers and find modest levels of convergence for Chicago and Los Angeles data. Although this convergence is encouraging, it probably represents the best-case scenario, as Chicago and Los Angeles have been using a formal definition to classify gang-related crimes for a longer time than most cities have. The findings suggest that for smaller jurisdictions or cities where the gang problem emerged in the past decade, the validity of even homicide data may leave much to be desired.

An important finding of this research is the decline in gang homicides observed at the end of the 1990s. The decline in homicide has been chronicled in various sources (Blumstein and Wallman 2000). It is encouraging to see documentation that gang homicides followed this decline, albeit later in the decade and at a somewhat slower pace. If the trend continues, it will have major implications for policymakers and practitioners. A decline in gang homicides may signal a decline in the level of gang activity, gang membership, gang violence, or all three. Researchers are advised to track such trends in their jurisdictions and use the data to help map policy and problem-solving responses.

The section on correlates of gang homicide is the most intriguing, but least developed, part of the paper. Owing to the limited number of years of data available, it is not possible to examine a time-series analysis of the correlates of the decline in gang homicides. Yet Maxson and her colleagues report that the size of a jurisdiction and the magnitude of the reported gang problem (as measured by the number of gangs and gang members) are likely correlates of gang homicide. Although this finding is based on a small number of years, it is likely to persist through time-series analyses. This likelihood suggests a pattern of gang homicides that will invite closer scrutiny from researchers over the next decade, as more data become available. In addition, gang homicide may be a sentinel for other problems in a community and bears watching for other reasons. The utility of NYGC data has been validated by this paper.

Evaluating G.R.E.A.T.

The American response to youth problems has seldom been based on a clear conceptual model that has strong empirical support. As Gottfredson (1997) notes, a host of "feel good" programs attempt to prevent problems before they emerge or worsen. Much of what passes as school-based prevention falls into this category of well-meaning but low-impact programs. Since 1998, the U.S. Department of Education has worked to promote the use of effective programs. "National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program," by Finn-Aage Esbensen and his colleagues (presented in chapter 5), reflects a large-scale research effort to evaluate the success of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program. Oversight for G.R.E.A.T. is currently provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and representatives from five local law enforcement agencies (Phoenix; Portland, Oregon; Philadelphia; La Crosse, Wisconsin; and Orange County, Florida). It is offered in more than 2,100 schools to more than 340,000 students nationwide. G.R.E.A.T. is a classroom-based program of instruction that consists of eight lessons delivered in nine sessions designed to teach (primarily) middle school students life skills that will enable them to resist the pressures of gangs, drugs, and delinquency. It is essentially a cognitive program that depends on teaching students facts and offering suggestions about how to respond to situations they may encounter. As such, it resembles the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®) program.

The evaluation team chose the opportunity to evaluate G.R.E.A.T. to enhance knowledge of gangs, delinquency, and the risk and resiliency factors related to involvement (or noninvolvement) in gangs or delinquency. The team proposed a ***theory-driven*** evaluation, that is, a research process in which key theoretical questions about the nature of gangs and gang behavior are assessed. In addition to providing information on the impact of the G.R.E.A.T. program, this study generated an extensive and impressive body of research during the evaluation.[1] The careful attention to data collection, concern for measurement issues, and large and diverse sample should furnish information about gangs and delinquency for the next decade. The theory-driven nature of the evaluation suggests that the research team was also attentive to the conceptual issues involved in the intervention, a strength also noted in Boston's Operation Ceasefire research. Gang programs are evaluated too infrequently, and evaluated well even less frequently. When evaluations of large-scale programs are conducted as well as this one was, they will offer hope for the future of evaluation research. The broad perspective on evaluation research held by Esbensen and his colleagues argues that such a view should be required by funding agencies in the future.

The results of the evaluation are interesting in themselves. The initial cross-sectional results suggested that G.R.E.A.T. had an impact on increasing students' knowledge of how to stay out of trouble ***and*** on reducing self-reported delinquency and adolescent misbehavior. These findings exceeded appropriate levels of statistical significance and caused a stir among the research team and many gang researchers. How could a nine-session program delivered by a noneducator pay such dividends? The answer came shortly thereafter, when more powerful and appropriate longitudinal results were made available. As expected, few differences were found between the control and program groups over time, and program effects diminished. The longitudinal evaluation did produce favorable results, however. In this phase of the study, the researchers used a quasi-experimental design and a sophisticated multivariate statistical analysis strategy—hierarchical linear modeling. The result was a number of small but important differences between students who participated in the G.R.E.A.T. program and those who did not. All these favorable outcomes, which could not have occurred by chance, emerged 3 or 4 years after program completion. They constitute important evidence of the utility of such programs.

When the initial cross-sectional results were reported, the program did not appear to have favorable effects. Then a surprising thing happened. Evaluation researchers do not look forward to telling program officials that the program simply did not produce the desired results despite the commitment of program staff to the welfare of participants. When ATF received the results of the evaluation, it contracted with the researchers to convene a process that would bring gang researchers, G.R.E.A.T. trainers, curriculum experts, and educators together to redesign the curriculum. That process is currently underway, and ATF remains committed to conducting a full-scale process and impact evaluation of the newly designed curriculum.

Mapping Gang Activity

James W. Meeker and Bryan J. Vila are one of the most productive gang research teams.[2] The significance of their work in Orange County, California, which was initially funded by NIJ in 1996, is highlighted by the demographic characteristics of that county, a diverse and rapidly changing environment for youth gangs. As in many communities in the early 1990s, it was unclear whether the public hysteria in Orange County over youth gangs reflected the reality of the gang problem. Such circumstances are rife with the potential to create what Huff (1990) identifies as overreaction and misidentification. Under such circumstances, the public pressures law enforcement to "do something" about gangs. Law enforcement rarely requires much motivation to identify and suppress gangs; it casts a net so wide that many believe it overcriminalizes youths (particularly minority youths) and defines the problem so broadly that it cannot deal with it successfully. This research was undertaken in partnership with law enforcement in an attempt to circumvent these problems.

Like the best of the research in this volume, the study by Meeker, Vila, and Katie J.B. Parsons combines a focus on applied policy issues with a larger concern with basic research issues about gangs. "Developing a GIS-Based Regional Gang Incident Tracking System" (chapter 10 in this volume) describes the evolution of a collaborative process between the University of California–Irvine research team and local law enforcement. The paper is virtually a textbook description of the dilemmas encountered when working with multiple law enforcement agencies to arrive at common definitions of gangs, gang members, and gang incidents. The process by which these definitions were negotiated, implemented, and tested is described in considerable detail and serves as a useful blueprint for other researcher-practitioner teams planning to engage in a similar process.

At first reading, it would appear that the research team's primary contribution was to develop a management information system that combined sophisticated mapping and analytic capabilities. Such a reading, however, would miss the key ingredients of the collaborative process that led researchers to help law enforcement frame both strategic and tactical questions. This was possible only through the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Like the process employed in Operation Ceasefire in Boston, data analysis here was continually fed back to the law enforcement partners in Orange County, whose input into measurement, data collection, and analysis was a key component of the project. Because of the essential nature of the collaboration, it is important to track the longevity of this working group. Whether such collaboration lasts is a key question raised about many such groups. The extent to which the researcher-practitioner partnership outlives the grant is an important measure of institutionalization.

Evaluating Nevada's Antigang Legislation

A common refrain in this review of NIJ-funded gang research is that a particular topic has received too little scrutiny. The same can be said of the legislative and prosecutorial responses to gangs. Both the Orange County study and the work of Terance D. Miethe and Richard C. McCorkle in Nevada were motivated by interest in, and concern with, overreaction to, and misidentification of gangs. "Evaluating Nevada's Antigang Legislation and Gang Prosecution Units" (found in chapter 6) examines the evolution of Nevada's specialized gang legislation and how it is being implemented in that State's two largest counties (Clark and Washoe, which contain Las Vegas and Reno, respectively). Miethe and McCorkle employed multiple methods, including content analyses of public hearings and records, statistical analyses of court cases, and field observations and interviews with criminal justice officials. Their research gets to the heart of the issue of responding to gangs and gang crime, as legislative responses can help frame the overall criminal justice response.

When a legislature responds in an overly punitive manner, extending the reach of the criminal justice system beyond what a "rational" analysis of the gang problem would dictate, the system will adapt appropriately. Miethe and McCorkle document this process quite effectively. Ironically, Nevada's gang legislation was used by prosecutors most often for minor firearms offenses (such as "aiming" a firearm) and less commonly against more serious and common instances of gang crime such as driveby shootings. Equally important, they find that after controlling for case and offender characteristics, conviction and incarceration rates of specialized units are remarkably similar to those of nonspecialized units. The researchers do note, however, that the threat of such prosecutions may have played a role in defendants' deciding to plead guilty to other charges.

One key question that law enforcement must face is whether special laws, law enforcement units, prosecution units, or sentencing enhancements are a necessary response to gang crime. Miethe and McCorkle conclude that specialized units may not be necessary, as they produce little more than the "typical" approaches to crime with regard to sentence length and probability of incarceration. When combined with work by Klein (1995a), which suggests that specialized gang enforcement units add little to enforcement beyond traditional approaches, the strong implication is that specialized approaches have little to recommend them. Although this implication raises obvious and important questions for the criminal justice system, it must also cause researchers to assess whether gang crime is different from other crime. If it is not, it may be appropriate to reassess whether using "gang" as a category is a meaningful approach.

Young Women in Gangs

Despite the veritable explosion of gang research in the past decade, insufficient attention has been paid to female gangs and gang members. Jody Miller's paper, "Young Women in Street Gangs: Risk Factors, Delinquency, and Victimization Risk" (chapter 3), helps to correct that deficiency. Using field interviewing techniques, Miller interviewed 94 young women from Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri. The approach called for interviews of both gang members and nonmembers to assess the reasons for joining gangs, the meaning and nature of gang life, and the impact of gender on these issues. Miller cites the role of neighborhoods, serious family problems, and gang-involved family members as three critical factors that influenced the decisions of young women she studied to join gangs. Indeed, these three factors were critical in differentiating gang members from nonmembers on a variety of measures. Interestingly, Miller reports considerable variation among female gang members with regard to such factors as participation in delinquency and violence and victimization experiences.

It is one thing to conduct research on young women and quite another to consider the role of gender in their lives. Miller does a masterful job of explaining the role of gender in gang life, particularly as regards victimization experiences.[3] The findings presented here clearly support the argument that gang membership increases young women's risk of victimization. This was less true for risk of sexual assault victimization, which gang members and nonmembers experienced at roughly similar rates, but important differences were found between gang members and nonmembers for other forms of victimization, particularly assaults. Although it increased their exposure to violence and victimization, the gang was also viewed by its members as a source of strength, owing to the protection it provided for members. Ironically, they saw the association with male gang members as providing such protection, particularly against sexual violence, because such exploitation occurred primarily in the content of the family.

Although this research addresses more basic research issues, the implications for policy are clear and significant. Gang membership shows as much variation for young women as it does for men, suggesting that a monolithic intervention is unlikely to be successful. In addition, gang membership creates substantial crime victimization risks for young women, which, in turn, solidify their ties to the gang. Designing interventions that address these factors is a major challenge for the next decade of gang research.

A Task Force Approach

The use of task forces to respond to drug, gang, and gun problems is not new in law enforcement. In "Evaluation of a Task Force Approach to Gangs" (chapter 7 of this volume), Susan Pennell and Roni Melton document such an approach, initiated in San Diego County, California, in 1988. This task force, known as JUDGE (Jurisdictions Unified for Drug Gang Enforcement), included representatives from law enforcement, probation, parole, the State's narcotics enforcement agency, the district attorney, and the local department of social services, in an effort coordinated through the State Office of Criminal Justice Planning. Funded by the Edward Byrne State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program through the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, JUDGE targeted offenders under supervision by State probation or parole. The research presented in this chapter tracks the evolution of this group as it dealt with the ebb and flow of drug, gang, and violent offending.

As was the case in some of the other research discussed above, the research plan could not be fully implemented despite almost ideal circumstances. Pennell is a veteran of applied research who has strong ties to the agencies implementing JUDGE. Despite this, the design fell through for reasons beyond the control of the researchers. Pennell and Melton suggest that different definitions of gangs and gang members lie at the heart of the research team's inability to find a suitable comparison group. The initial proposal was for a pre-post quasi-experimental design that would compare probation violations and offense rates for juvenile probationers targeted by the JUDGE intervention with a comparable group of juveniles who were on probation before the program was implemented. Although this design could not adequately control for such design threats as history, selection bias, and maturation, it still had the potential to control several threats to the external validity of an evaluation. The inability to conduct the evaluation as planned was a considerable loss, as we know too little about the impact of task force approaches.

Despite the fact that the task force approach is widely accepted as an effective means of combating drug sales and gang problems, there is scant evidence to support this contention. As a consequence, this research represents a lost opportunity to learn more about several important topics. First, too little is known about the effectiveness of task forces, from either a process or an outcome standpoint. Consequently, the full impact of Byrne-funded task forces on drug crime, gangs, or other offenses is not yet understood. Second, the impact of drug-focused enforcement on gangs remains unknown. One remaining dilemma in gang research is the extent to which gangs and drugs overlap. Assessing the extent to which drug task forces "capture" gang members in their enforcement efforts could lead to a better understanding of this question. It is still unclear whether specific gang enforcement yields better—or different—results than do traditional forms of law enforcement. Finally, a major responsibility of researchers is to document specifically where their proposed research design went wrong and how to avoid these problems in future research.

The Evolution of Street Gangs

The research reported by Deborah Lamm Weisel in "The Evolution of Street Gangs: An Examination of Form and Variation" (chapter 2) attempts to assess the degree to which street gangs are evolving into organized crime groups. This is an important issue that bears on both basic and applied questions about the nature of gangs. If gangs are indeed becoming organized crime groups, the implications for law enforcement and social services are quite clear. Such groups will require more intensive intelligence, infiltration, and targeted prosecution—tactics that have proven effective in addressing organized crime groups. If street gangs are not evolving toward organized crime, however, such suppression techniques are likely to exacerbate the gang problem by strengthening gang leadership structures and making gangs more attractive (Klein 1995a). In addition, understanding the nature of change in gangs and the evolution of social groups would be an important addition to the basic understanding of gangs.

Weisel adopts a two-pronged research design to address this issue. The first part of the research used a nationwide mail survey of police agencies to identify law enforcement views of the nature and degree of gang organization in their jurisdictions. The response rate (74 percent) was high, although more detail on selecting the respondents in individual police departments would be desirable. The second part of the research used field study techniques to interview gang members in San Diego and Chicago. These cities were chosen because they represent both a "weak" and a "strong" test of the hypothesis that gangs are evolving into organized crime groups. San Diego was a strong test because it is not a chronic gang city, and Chicago, a chronic gang city, represented a weak test because its gangs had been in operation longer and were more established.

Not surprisingly, the two approaches yielded different results. Although Weisel asserts that delinquent gangs were the most typical group identified by the police, little in the definitions offered by law enforcement differentiates delinquent groups from groups of juveniles on the one hand or friendship groups of offending juveniles on the other. The use of accepted typologies of gangs, such as the empirical typology offered by Klein and Maxson (1996), would make this research more useful for practitioners and researchers. The effort to reconcile police survey results with gang member interviews is an important step in this process. Because of the sample size of gang members interviewed and the lack of compatibility between the instruments used for the two groups, it is difficult to know what the differences between the two groups mean. Weisel faced a difficult task trying to reconcile these differences; indeed, law enforcement expressed concern about some of her conclusions.[4] These disparities point to a critical issue: As Weisel correctly notes, the disparity has important consequences for the ability of law enforcement to deal effectively with gangs. After all, if law enforcement defines gangs in ways that are considerably different from the reality in the community, they can hardly be successful in responding to such groups.

Gaps in Our Knowledge

Each research project, each hypothesis, spawns a dozen more. The agenda of gang research is large and NIJ's role in addressing this research agenda is an important one. Many important topics demand the attention of the research and practitioner communities.[5]

Too little is understood about ethnicity and gangs, particularly for new immigrant groups. This focus has been a historic component of gang research, from Thrasher (1927) through Whyte (1943) to the present day and is especially important in light of increasing levels and complexities of immigration. Research also needs to explain more precisely the role of the media and popular culture in the genesis and spread of gangs. Too much information about these topics is anecdotal or generated by the media. Ongoing study of the diffusion of gangs, gang forms, and gang symbols is necessary to better understand this topic.

A major gap in our knowledge of gangs is the link (if any exists) between prison gangs and street gangs. It is known that a large number of gang members go to prison and then return to the streets, but the links that gang members maintain between prisons and the street; the nature of relationships between imprisoned gang members and their counterparts on the streets; and the nature, structure, and activities of prison gangs remain largely unknown.

Despite the growing emphasis on understanding the role of women in gangs, this area, too, needs to be expanded. And as the chapter by Miller in this volume underscores, the role of gender remains an important topic in gang research, whether the subjects include males, females, or both.

Many aspects of American culture, both positive and negative, are exported around the world. This is true of gangs as well. A better understanding of the importation and exportation of gang symbols, structure, culture, and behavior should be an important part of future gang research.

The use of the gang as the unit of analysis is also an important topic often ignored in gang research. After all, what makes gangs different from individuals or institutions is the group context and group impact on behavior. This leads naturally to the development and testing of typologies of gang structure and behavior. Too little contemporary gang research focuses on the group context of gang behavior.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we need to know "what works." The lack of even basic knowledge about the impact of interventions on gangs should be a clarion call to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. This conclusion applies to a variety of agencies and a variety of forms of interventions. In the area of suppression, for example, too little is understood about the role of specialized police units that focus on gangs, the impact of community policing on gangs, and the long-term consequences of policies that emphasize suppression over other aspects of intervention.[6] Very little is known about factors that inhibit or enhance gang membership among young children below the age at which they typically join and belong to a gang. Programs that might affect such decisions must be built on solid research, and it is safe to conclude that current programs have little on which to base their intervention strategies. Too little is known about the relative merits of comprehensive, broad-based interventions involving several agencies and targeted, single-agency interventions. In short, there has not been enough high-quality evaluation research on gang programs. The need for such evaluations is critical. Funding agencies have a key role in achieving the goal of high-quality evaluation designs. These agencies must insure that when programs are funded, the assignment of cases to control and experimental status is a condition of funding. This must be a high priority for the next decade of federally funded gang research.

Future Directions

Where does the future of gang research lie? The contributions to this report suggest seven important recommendations. Klein (1995a: 138) notes that there is a "paucity of respectable evaluations of gang intervention programs." Unfortunately, this observation remains true and continues to serve as the catalyst for future gang research. Thus, the first recommendation is that meaningful gang interventions must be evaluated. The level of funding for gang intervention programs demands evaluation and is—in Klein's words (1995a: 138)—"an inexcusable exercise in public irresponsibility." Both process and outcome must be evaluated, as our understanding of how programs are implemented is probably as important as the impact of such programs.

The second recommendation to emerge from these collected chapters is the importance of documenting failure. This refers to failures both of research design and in program implementation and impact. These, of course, are often linked. The research community has much to learn from the results of evaluations, but it cannot do so without full disclosure of the problems and prospects of such evaluations. This suggests that researchers will make the study design—as proposed and as implemented—available in full detail.

The third recommendation is that all gang research should be driven by a conceptual understanding of the problem. The research in this report by Esbensen, Freng, Taylor, Peterson, and Osgood is perhaps the best and strongest argument for this position. The research team began with a commitment to a theory-driven evaluation, which made possible an assessment of a broader range of questions that resulted in greater utility of the findings. This highlights the importance of addressing basic and applied questions, as they are inexorably linked. The use of logic models in this context is appropriate and necessary. Logic models display the underlying relationships and assumptions behind a program or policy by linking goals and objectives to outcomes.

The fourth, and related, recommendation is that future gang research should incorporate some of the insights of research literature outside the gang field. Too often, gang research is described in terms that seem to identify it as new and unique, when a larger body of related research already exists. One suggestion to emerge from this recommendation is that funded research must have a commitment beyond submitting a final report and should be expected to contribute to the broader scientific body of knowledge regarding gangs.

The fifth recommendation is that funded research should be required to adopt sound methodologies. This means that projects should submit letters of commitment regarding the evaluation in conjunction with the research proposal. This procedure would allow funding agencies to ensure that programs provide access to data and follow assignment protocols and that official data are available to evaluators.

The sixth recommendation is that future gang research should look to occasionally fund collaborative efforts; that is, groups of researchers who have identified substantively or methodologically linked issues. By employing such a tactic, it is possible to expand our knowledge of gang processes and gang programs, particularly in multicity contexts. The use of collaborative efforts does not stop with the research team. Strong peer review to select high-quality products and the involvement of research and practitioner peers to provide technical assistance, review progress of the research, and assist in overcoming hurdles is a responsibility that NIJ should shoulder.

The final recommendation is that government-funded gang research projects should consider the use of a dynamic problem-solving approach. The work reported in this volume by Braga and Kennedy and by Meeker, Vila, and Parsons reflects the importance of using research to help define problems, structure responses, and determine the success of responses. Program intervention seldom remains focused on the initial target. As a consequence, it is important to document the manner in which a program differs from its blueprint. In doing so, we can better understand how programs interact with their environments and adapt to the needs of those environments and the individuals such programs are designed to serve. A collaborative problem-solving approach can best accomplish these important goals.

This introduction began by noting the questions raised by Bookin-Weiner and Horowitz in 1983 about the end of gangs and the influence of politics in framing gang research agendas. As for the former, there is considerable evidence that gangs will be around for a while. The spread of gangs from urban to suburban and rural areas has been well documented, as has their impact on popular culture. Unlike the earlier emergence of gangs in this country, gangs in their current form seem to be gaining both cultural and institutional foundations that may signal their presence for some time to come.

The more interesting question raised by Bookin-Weiner and Horowitz concerns the role of politics and research, particularly in the context of government-funded research. It is often contended that government-funded research necessarily supports the status quo, is repressive in nature, and reinforces dominant political ideologies. The chapters in this report have a clear focus on the criminal and juvenile justice systems and, especially, on the impact of programs and policies. Yet it would be shortsighted to conclude that this is their sole focus. Clearly the work of Miller, Esbensen et al., and Braga and Kennedy has a strong theoretical focus that extends well beyond whether a policy or program simply works. These chapters also have a critical tone, expressed in Miller's conclusions about the role of gender, Esbensen's conclusions about the impact of G.R.E.A.T., and Weisel's concern about law enforcement views of the level of organization within gangs. But Miethe and McCorkle capture the critical edge best, noting the failure of gang legislation and prosecution to add much value beyond traditional efforts in these areas. Their work illustrates that it is possible to be critical of criminal justice policies while linking that criticism to a theoretical perspective. Indeed, researchers and practitioners alike probably learn more from such efforts than from more narrowly focused evaluations. In addition, these chapters illustrate the value of a diverse set of methods and the combination of multiple methods within a specific study.

Notes

1. The data from the evaluation are being submitted to NIJ and will be available to researchers through NIJ's Data Resources Program (See www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.)
2. It is ironic that an issue like gangs seems to lend itself to a team approach.
3. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Miller (2001).
4. Of course, gang members did not have the opportunity to express their reservations about law enforcement's definitions and conclusions.
5. These comments are more a reflection on the state of gang research than a direct reflection on the chapters in this volume.
6. There is, however, emerging research on these issues. See Katz (2001).

References

Blumstein, Alfred, and Joel Wallman. 2000. *The Crime Drop in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bookin-Weiner, Hedy, and Ruth Horowitz. 1983. "The End of the Youth Gang: Fad or Fact?" *Criminology* 21(4): 585–602.

Gottfredson, Denise. 1997. "School-Based: Crime Prevention" in *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising: A Report to the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Justice Programs. Prepared for the National Institute of Justice by Laurence W. Sherman, Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn Bushway. Chapter 5. NCJ 165366.

Huff, C. Ronald. 1990. "Denial, Overreaction, and Misidentification: A Postscript on Public Policy," in *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 310–317.

Katz, Charles M. 2001. "The Establishment of a Police Gang Unit: An Examination of Organizational and Environmental Factors." *Criminology* 39(1): 37–73.

Klein, Malcolm. 1995a. *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1995b. "Gang Cycles." In *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia. San Francisco: ICS Press: 217–236.

Maxson, Cheryl, and Malcolm Klein. 1990. "Street Gang Violence: Twice as Great, or Half as Great." In *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA.: Sage Publications: 71–100.

Maxson, Cheryl, M.A. Gordon, and Malcolm Klein. 1985. "Differences between Gang and Nongang Homicides." *Criminology* 23(2): 209–222.

Miller, Jody. 2001. *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spergel, Irving, and G. David Curry. 1993. "The National Youth Gang Survey: A Research and Development Process." In *The Gang Intervention*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Handbook, ed. C. Ronald Huff and Arnold Goldstein. Champaign, IL: Research Press: 359–400.

Thrasher, Frederic. 1927. *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Travis, Jeremy, and Alfred Blumstein. 2000. "Departing Thoughts from an NIJ Director." *NIJ Journal* 243(April): 22–29.

Whyte, William F. 1943. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 2

The Evolution of Street Gangs: An Examination of Form and Variation

Deborah Lamm Weisel, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science and
Public Administration
North Carolina State University

Acknowledgments

The research presented in this chapter was supported under award 92–IJ–CX–K036 from the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

Abstract

If street gangs are metamorphosing into organized criminal enterprises and large, highly organized structures, that would suggest they are becoming an even more serious threat. To determine whether this is happening, researchers examined the prevalence of different types of gangs and identified changes over time in their forms and functions. They obtained information from surveys conducted among almost 300 large police agencies and from interviews with members of four Chicago and San Diego gangs. The police and gang members' perceptions were surprisingly similar. Little specialization of roles and organization in the gangs was identified; instead there was a wide range of gang types with various structures and a great variety of criminal activities. Even though some gangs were large and had existed for many years, and even though some gangs exhibited some features of highly structured organizations, overall there was little evidence of evolution into formal organizations resembling traditional organized crime. Instead, the gangs appeared to represent an adaptive or organic form of organization, featuring diffuse leadership and continuity despite the absence of hierarchy. Gangs in both cities experienced considerable organizational change over time—consolidating, merging, acquiring smaller gangs, reorganizing, and splintering. Their "generalist" orientation may have contributed to their ability to adapt to these changes and survive in a volatile environment. The criminal versatility of gangs suggests that law enforcement directed at particular criminal behavior will work primarily for gangs that are specialized, but most are not; and enforcement and prosecution directed at targeting gang leadership may be suitable only to the few gangs that have distinctive leadership patterns.

34

Street gangs continue to be a pervasive problem in America's cities. They contribute to high rates of violent crime, instill fear in citizens, and engage in a range of troublesome behavior, from vandalism and graffiti to drug dealing and property crime. Problems related to gangs—especially those that are more organized, engage in serious criminal activity, or are violent—are a major concern. Although gangs have been around since at least the beginning of the 20th century, it is plausible that at least some of these organizations are changing, developing into criminal enterprises that may be similar in structure and criminal activity to traditional organized crime.

Much of the evidence that gangs may be metamorphosing into organized-crime-like enterprises is anecdotal, suggested by high-profile prosecutions, media coverage, or the actions of law enforcement agencies. Cases such as the 1987 conviction of members of Chicago's El Rukns on terrorism charges, which linked that gang with Libya's Moammar Gadhafi, raised concerns about the seriousness and possible transformation of contemporary gangs. Other high-profile cases, in which Federal RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) charges were used to convict gang members, reinforced these concerns. Indeed, the Federal response to gangs bolstered the perception that gangs were becoming highly organized criminal enterprises. In 1991, the FBI created Operation Safe Streets, a program in which the bureau's 52 field offices participate in a series of multiagency task forces targeting gangs and violent crime (Freeh 1999), in which 300 agents were reassigned from counterintelligence to violent crime investigations. The media coverage of and political reaction to gang violence contributed to perceptions that the gang problem was becoming increasingly serious (Jackson and Rudman 1993; Zatz 1987; McCorkle and Miethe 1998).

As a result of widespread evidence of rising gang violence and the incursion of gangs into middle America, numerous questions have been raised about gangs. In the 1990s, many gangs were widely described as rather disorganized groups (Klein 1995a; Spergel 1995). As Thrasher (1963) pointed out, however, "under favorable conditions," gangs can undergo a "natural evolution" from a loosely organized group into a mature form.[1] How does this occur? As gangs become more prevalent, do they become more highly organized, taking on the features of formal organizations? Do gangs naturally become larger and develop greater labor and criminal specialization? While a large body of literature on organizational evolution suggests that successful organizations become larger and more formally organized over time (see, for example, Simmel 1902–3; Starbuck 1965; Greiner 1972; Kimberly, Miles, and

Associates 1980; Staw and Cummings 1990), scant attention has been paid to the ways in which gangs change over time. These and other questions shaped this inquiry into the form and evolution of contemporary gangs.

This study was conducted to generate information about the different types of gangs and to document the changes occurring in them over time. The first part of the study was designed to identify and describe the different types of gangs through police sources, focusing on distinctions between the typical gang and the more serious gangs in a jurisdiction—violent gangs, drug-dealing gangs, and entrepreneurial or money-making gangs. The second part of this study was designed to examine highly organized gangs to determine how they are organized and shed light on their evolution over time.

Approach to Research

Two methods of research were used—a nationwide mail survey of police agencies, conducted in 1995, and structured, in-person interviews with gang members in four gangs in two cities, conducted in 1996 and 1997.

The aim of the survey, administered to 385 large municipal police agencies, was to identify the various types of gangs and highlight distinctions among them by organizational characteristics, demographic composition, criminal activities, and other factors. The survey drew from Fagan's (1989) typology of gangs: violent, drug-dealing, entrepreneurial, delinquent, or social—a typology based predominantly on the behavior of gang members.[2] Also examined were the evolution of gangs over time, including changing patterns of leadership, organizational characteristics, and gang duration.

In the field portion of the study, four highly organized criminal gangs in Chicago and San Diego were examined. "Organized" gangs are the exception, not the rule, among the universe of gangs in the United States. In the fieldwork, the organizational structure of these gangs was investigated and documented and changes in these gangs over time were identified, including their transformation or transition into groups or organizations resembling traditional organized crime groups. Differences and similarities between gangs within and across the two cities were highlighted.

By focusing on the most serious or organized gangs within jurisdictions, this study, in effect, ignores the most common or typical gangs. These more typical or prevalent gangs are no less important than the more organized gangs, and may be more troublesome for communities on a day-to-day basis. Yet this research sought to understand how serious gangs operated and the extent to which typical gangs develop or evolve into more serious or mature gangs over time. Concentrating on a particular type of gang made it possible to gather specific information about individual gangs rather than being limited to collecting general information about a broader range of gangs. By focusing on the "most organized" gangs, the research team was able to home in on characteristics of specific gangs and examine how they have evolved in recent years. As Blau and Scott (1962: 224) note, large organizations did "not spring into existence full-blown but develop[ed] out of simpler ones." An examination of these mature gangs may therefore provide unique insight into the effect of organizational processes on an important subset of contemporary gangs. Thus, although an examination of four gangs limits the generalizability of findings to all gangs, the greater depth of the investigation makes it possible to arrive at reasoned judgments about the extent of organization likely among other, less organized gangs. In addition, by examining the dynamics of highly organized gangs, the study lays the groundwork for a reexamination of how law enforcement monitors and responds to criminal gangs and other criminal groups.

The mail survey was distributed to all law enforcement agencies serving populations of 100,000 or more and to a randomly selected third of all agencies serving populations between 50,000 and 100,000.[3] Responses were obtained from 82 percent of agencies serving large populations and 57 percent of agencies serving small populations—a total of 286 agencies.[4] This number represented 74 percent of all agencies surveyed.

Two cities—Chicago and San Diego—were selected for the field portion of the study. On their face, these two cities and their gang problems were quite different. Chicago, with a population of nearly 3 million, reported an estimated 130 gangs and 60,000 gang members in 1997.[5] Gangs have existed in Chicago since at least the beginning of the last century. In stark contrast, street gangs are a much more recent phenomenon in San Diego, although the roots of the city's gangs in its Latino car clubs date to the 1950s (see, for example, Pennell et al. 1994). San Diego had an estimated 65 gangs and nearly 5,000 gang members in 1997. The two cities also vary in demographics, economic conditions, urban geography, and in other important ways. In Klein's (1995a) terms, Chicago can be characterized as a "chronic" gang city, while San Diego is considered an "emerging" gang city. Gang crime has been estimated as linked to more than 50 percent of crime in Chicago, while reported gang involvement in crime is much lower in San Diego (National Drug Intelligence Center 1998). Indeed, the two cities were selected precisely because of these differences as well as the presumed differences in the nature and characteristics of their gangs.

Two gangs in each city were selected for study—a Hispanic and a black gang in each. The Black Gangster Disciples (BGDs) and the Latin Kings were selected in Chicago, and the Logan Calle Treinta/Red Steps and Lincoln Park Piru/Syndo Mob gangs in San Diego.[6] Like their home cities, the gangs also varied. The BGDs are one of the largest and most well-established gangs in the country. With an estimated membership of 10,000 to 30,000, this gang has been heavily involved in drug trafficking. It was established about 1974, although its roots are in the 1960s. The BGDs have been remarkably tenacious despite the conviction and death of key leaders. In the 1990s, they formed a prosocial group called Growth and Development, which shares the same initials as the gang, to further educational and economic objectives. The Latin Kings, with 3,000 to 15,000 members, are also an extremely large gang. This gang was established in the 1960s or 1970s, but its roots go back to the 1940s.

In San Diego, the gang known as Syndo Mob was a set of Lincoln Park Piru, a predominantly black gang formed in the early 1980s with an initial membership of 12 people. The organization was heavily involved in drug trafficking, but some 26 members were indicted on Federal charges, and by the late 1980s its ranks had been decimated. In the mid-1990s, the gang had approximately 165 members. In contrast to Syndo, the Logan gang factions of Calle Treinta and Red Steps are Hispanic. The roots of the Logan gang go back to the 1940s, while Calle Treinta and Red Steps were both established in the mid-1970s. Each set has approximately 200 members.

The gang members interviewed for this study were identified through probation and prison sources in each city. Researchers sought to identify gang members who were more intensively involved with the gang and hence presumably more knowledgeable about its organization and activities. Gang members were asked to participate in a semistructured interview, assured of confidentiality, and paid $20 for participating. A total of 85 gang members were interviewed—26 Black Gangster Disciples, 18 Latin Kings, 20 from the Logan factions, and 21 from the Syndo Mob. Of the gang members interviewed, 61 percent (52) were contacted through the local probation department and the remainder were identified through prison records. The sample was opportunistic and is in no way random or representative.

Among the research issues this study examined were the nature of the organizational structure and criminal activity of the specific gangs and gang types. The study sought to determine the ways in which criminal gangs may be organizationally similar to traditional crime groups. The types of criminal activity in which these gangs engage and some of the organizational characteristics of these gangs were also examined.

Examining gangs both from the police perspective and from within the gang itself made it possible to compare and contrast these two (presumably quite divergent) points of view. Because police are concerned primarily with criminal activity, in many jurisdictions they tend to concentrate their attention on the most serious gangs and the most serious offenders in those gangs. Nonetheless, because local police deal with a wide range of behavior, from disorder, vandalism, and loitering to driveby shootings and drug dealing, they have a broad perspective on gang behavior.[7] In contrast, gang members tend to view their gang from a different perspective, focusing more on their gang's friendship networks than on its criminal activity.

The Police Perspective

Police agencies surveyed in this study were able to identify the various types of gangs that coexist in their communities and how these gangs differed in some important ways. When asked to categorize the most typical gang in their jurisdiction, police responded that the delinquent gang is most common. Forty-six percent of police respondents said that the typical gang in their jurisdiction is a delinquent gang consisting primarily of juveniles who engage in vandalism and other delinquent behavior, or a more socially oriented or "party" gang. Twenty-six percent of respondents reported drug-dealing gangs (or other entrepreneurial gangs) as the most typical in their jurisdiction, whereas 28 percent reported violent gangs as most typical.[8]

Overall, more police respondents described the typical gang in their jurisdiction as a loose-knit organization (45 percent) with no formal structure (47 percent), territorial (50 percent), and primarily oriented toward criminal purposes (60 percent). Respondents were divided in their view of the leadership structure of the typical gang: 30 percent said that their typical gang had no formal leadership, whereas 37 percent reported formal leadership as a component of the typical gang.

Police see important regional differences in gang structure and activities. As expected, the larger cities typically have more gangs, larger gangs, and gangs that have been in existence for longer periods of time. Consistent with that observation, these cities also tend to have gangs that are more involved in serious criminal activity, are more highly organized, and have a more identifiable leadership structure. Delinquent gangs, more common in smaller cities, tend to be more loosely organized, with ephemeral leadership; these gangs are newer and lack the historic roots of gangs established generations ago. Delinquent gangs were reported as most typical among Southeast and Midwest respondents (by 56 and 54 percent, respectively). In the Western States, violent gangs were most common, whereas income-generating gangs (including drug-dealing gangs) were reported most commonly in the Northeast (see exhibit 1). Despite the predominance of gang type by region, large numbers of respondents reported other types of gangs in the region. For example, 35 percent of respondents in the Northeast and 42 percent of respondents in the West reported delinquent gangs as most typical.

The distribution of number of gangs within jurisdictions was consistent with the findings for types of typical gang by size of jurisdiction; violent gangs were identified less frequently in small cities, and delinquent gangs were identified most frequently. In cities with populations of 100,000 or less, 13 percent of respondents classified their typical gang as violent while 66 percent of respondents in these cities classified their typical gang as delinquent. In large cities (with populations of 200,000 or more), 44 percent of respondents classified their typical gang as violent. Yet even a large proportion of respondents from large cities—nearly one-third (31 percent)—reported delinquent gangs as their most typical gang.

Exhibit 1: Type of Typical Gang, by Region

Region	Violent Gangs (*n* = 132)	Income-Generating Gangs* (*n* = 74)	Delinquent Gangs (*n* = 80)
Northeast	11%	54%	35%
Southeast	18	26	56
Midwest	14	33	54
West	45	13	42
Total	28	26	46

* Includes drug-dealing gangs.

Source: Survey of police, 1995

Police were asked a series of questions about the structure of more serious gangs in each jurisdiction—the violent, drug-dealing, and entrepreneurial gangs. Police respondents most often described serious gangs as lacking a clear or hierarchical organizational structure: More than half of respondents reported that their violent gangs and drug-dealing gangs (51 and 56 percent, respectively) had no clear organizational structure. A similar number reported that violent and drug-dealing gangs had no clear leadership. Entrepreneurial gangs were the type of gang the police viewed as most likely to feature a hierarchy: 36 percent said that entrepreneurial gangs in their jurisdictions had an organizational structure, and 41 percent said that these gangs had a clearly identifiable leadership.

Criminal Activity of Gangs

Klein's observations (1995a) about street gangs and the Youth Gang Survey's findings about youth gangs (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1999) were confirmed by police, who reported a great deal of criminal versatility among their serious gangs.[9] Assaults, crack cocaine sales, graffiti, intimidation, vandalism, violence as a means of discipline, and violence as a means of retaliation were the most common criminal activities of gangs as reported by police respondents.[10] Each gang type tended to favor certain sorts of crimes. For example, entrepreneurial gangs were reported to have the highest involvement in motor vehicle theft and theft in general, whereas violent gangs had the highest involvement in assault, intimidation, graffiti, and vandalism. As expected, drug-dealing gangs were the most involved in selling crack, powder cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs, according to the police.

Yet police reported that most gangs, regardless of type, participated in many different types of crime (see exhibit 2). For example, entrepreneurial gangs frequently also sell crack cocaine, with 39 percent of police respondents reporting that these gangs often or very often engage in such activity. Similarly, violent gangs frequently commit burglary, with 36 percent of police respondents reporting high levels of participation. Police reported that all gang types mark their territories with graffiti, although the highest level of participation was associated with violent gangs (67 percent of respondents). Although drug-dealing is featured prominently in police estimates of gang activity, only one type of gang—drug-dealing gangs—engages predominantly in this activity.

Exhibit 2: Criminal Activity, by Gang Type

Crime	Percent of Police Who Report That Violent Gangs Commit the Offense Very Often or Often (*n* = 223)	Percent of Police Who Report That Drug-Dealing Gangs Commit the Offense Very Often or Often (*n* = 148)	Percent of Police Who Report That Entrepreneurial Gangs Commit the Offense Very Often or Often (*n* = 75)
Motor Vehicle Theft	25	25	44
Arson	1	1	1
Assault	87	69	57
Burglary	36	25	37
Driveby Shooting	42	49	32
Crack Sale	55	80	39
Powder Cocaine Sale	23	46	29
Marijuana Sale	35	54	33
Other Drug Sale	17	26	25
Graffiti	67	50	38
Home Invasion	10	11	27
Intimidation	81	72	74
Rape	7	4	8
Robbery	33	30	36
Shooting	37	41	38
Theft	49	37	52
Vandalism	57	38	37

Note: Reflects aggregation of police estimates of participation in criminal activity by a gang of that type in the jurisdiction.

The breadth of criminal activity identified within the various gang types suggests that while police may characterize gangs as concentrating on a specific type of crime (such as drug dealing), gangs as criminal organizations (and their members) have great criminal versatility, participating in a range of crimes rather than specializing in a few crime types. Police responses in this study indicated a clear recognition of this criminal versatility.

From the police perspective, serious gangs are changing over time in ways that create more problems for police and the community: 78 percent of police respondents said serious gangs had grown larger in the past 3 years, while 72 percent said serious gangs had become more violent during that period. (The term "serious gang" combines gangs identified by respondents as violent, drug-dealing, and entrepreneurial gangs.) Police respondents said that serious gangs had grown larger in the past 3 years, both in size and in geographic coverage. Some of the growth had occurred through retention of older members who failed to leave the gang, effectively increasing the gang's size. Fifty-four percent of police respondents reported that the average age of members of serious gangs had increased.

Gangs had also expanded geographically over the past 3 years: 53 percent of police respondents said serious gangs had migrated into their community, and 43 percent reported that gangs in their city had expanded to other jurisdictions, including suburban communities. Serious gangs are also causing more problems for police, evolving into organizations that have some features of traditional organized crime. Seventy-two percent of police respondents reported that in the past 3 years serious gangs were using more sophisticated weapons, and 46 percent reported that gangs had developed links with other crime groups. A total of 19 percent of police respondents in the past 3 years said that gangs were committing more sophisticated crime, 17 percent reported that they were using more sophisticated technology, and 16 percent said they had acquired legitimate businesses.

Summary of Survey Findings

Police respondents portrayed a picture of gangs that reflected recognition of a wide array of sizes, organizational structures, and activities. Rather than characterizing all gangs in much the same way, police drew clear distinctions among different gangs and among different types of gangs in their jurisdictions. Notably, most police respondents did not appear to stereotype serious gangs as highly organized or highly specialized.

For this study, information from the police provided a context for examining the organizational evolution of serious gangs from a different perspective—through the eyes of gang members. Because of their institutional objectives, police tend to look at gangs from the perspective of their criminal behavior; examining gang structure, leadership, and noncriminal gang activities are of secondary importance. Yet understanding how gangs emerge, grow, and evolve over time has substantial implications for police in developing effective strategies in response to the gang problem.

The Perspective of Gang Members

In the second part of this study, the nature of four gangs and their changes over time were examined from the perspective of gang members. The gangs were the Syndo Mob/Lincoln Park Piru and Calle Treinta/Red Steps in San Diego and the Black Gangster Disciples and Latin Kings in Chicago. Members of two of the gangs described their gang and its operations as disorganized. By measures of formal organization, two of the four gangs were found to be highly organized, but only one could be characterized as exhibiting features of traditional organized crime.

The gangs were examined with a view to determining whether they exhibited the characteristics of formal organizations or bureaucratic structures, including leadership, role differentiation, participation in formal meetings, compliance with formal rules and discipline, specialization, and goal orientation.[11] The two Chicago gangs were higher on every measure of organization than those in San Diego. Both Chicago gangs featured more formal and distinctive roles of leadership, more explicit (and even written) rules and clearer consequences for breaking them, more routinely held and purposeful meetings, and the collection of dues. Only in the Black Gangster Disciples were there high levels of relationships with neighborhood businesses (including ownership and control of these businesses), relationships with gangs in other cities across the country, formal contacts with prison gangs, and involvement in political activities. These features are also characteristic of organized crime.

Although some law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI, would characterize San Diego's Latin Kings as highly organized (see the sidebar on the FBI's Enterprise Theory of Investigation), the gang members interviewed did not uniformly support that view. Some Latin Kings described some features of formal organizations, but most did not. This inconsistency between the study findings and the perspective of Federal law enforcement agencies is not unexpected. The FBI's focus is on economic enterprise where there is gang leadership; this view may exaggerate the role of older or more crime-involved gang members. Although leaders, adult members, and heavy crime involvement may be present within the gang, these features are unlikely to characterize the gang as a whole.

Unlike the Chicago gangs, the gangs examined in San Diego featured little formal leadership, and were described by the gang members interviewed as primarily friendship and kinship networks rather than criminal enterprises.

Gangs in Chicago also included these traits of friendship and brotherhood, but they were subordinate to the objectives of economic opportunity and protection.

Many of the organizational differences between Chicago and San Diego gangs may be attributable to the vastly different size of the gangs and the respective gang population. Although Chicago is about twice as large as San Diego in population, it has nearly 12 times more gang members. Of the gangs studied, the largest Chicago gang is approximately 25 times larger than either San Diego gang. Even by the most conservative estimates of the number of BGD members, this exponential difference in size likely contributes to much of the organizational characteristics.

Criminal Activity of Gangs

Like the police respondents, gang members in both cities reported that their gang is extensively involved in a wide range of criminal activity. Indeed, gang members reported much greater participation of their gang in specific criminal activities than police attributed to specific serious gangs. In the interviews, gang members reported about two to three times as much criminal activity as did police.

The wide variety of criminal activity reported by gang members indicates little specialization of the gang as a criminal enterprise (see exhibit 3). Again, this finding is consistent with Klein's (1995a) depiction of gangs as criminally versatile. Assaults and drug sales were the activity most often reported, but most gang members said that their gangs were involved in almost every criminal activity. In fact, the only exception was the Latin Kings' involvement in shootings: Only for this crime did less than a majority indicate their gang was involved.

Although the San Diego gangs were less formally organized, the members interviewed reported levels of criminal behavior as high as those reported by the Chicago gang members. In fact, for all but three crimes, gang members from San Diego reported even higher gang participation than Chicago gangs. Gang members from the two cities reported similar gang participation rates in assaults, driveby shootings, and crack sales.

The high levels of participation in a wide range of criminal behavior by all four gangs suggests that these gangs can be considered criminal generalists.

The FBI's Enterprise Theory of Investigation

Gangs vary greatly in size, criminal sophistication, modus operandi, and their impact on the community. The vast majority of gangs in the United States are community or neighborhood based and adversely affect small geographical areas. Some gangs, however, grow rapidly in size and sophistication, becoming multijurisdictional and even international in nature.

The goal of the FBI's national gang strategy, known as the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI), is to identify, disrupt, and ultimately dismantle violent gangs whose activities constitute criminal enterprises. Stated succinctly, the strategy is for the FBI, in conjunction with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies, to combat major domestic violent street gang/drug enterprises as significant threats to American society through sustained, multidivisional, coordinated investigations that support successful prosecution. This strategy incorporates investigative and prosecutorial theories of enterprise investigations that have proven successful in combating traditional organized crime. Although ETI is not an appropriate way to deal with every jurisdiction's street gang problem, it is an effective technique to use against large, multijurisdictional street gangs.

The FBI defines a "violent street gang/drug enterprise" as a criminal enterprise that has an organizational structure and that functions as a continuing criminal conspiracy, employing violence and any other criminal activity to sustain itself. A criminal enterprise is any union or group of individuals engaged in a pattern of criminal activity. For an enterprise to be "criminal," it is not necessary for it to have written bylaws or written agreements between the individuals.

Street gangs are increasingly viewed as organized crime threats because they are heavily involved in illegal drugs or guns, seek dominance in many new areas of the country, and often use violence in pursuing their objectives. Street gang drug and gun activities often produce criminal networks that span regional and national boundaries and use modern weapons, communication technology, and transportation in their operations. FBI analysis suggests that some gangs are building coalitions to control and expand their operations more effectively.

As they grow, gangs involved in criminal operations must develop an organizational structure if they are to function efficiently. Most gangs are loosely knit coalitions of small, autonomous cliques. Apart from a general commitment to their "hood" and the gang lifestyle, the only unifying force is combat with outsiders. Gang leadership is usually decentralized, nonhierarchical, even situational; it is more a function of individual prowess and reputation than a formalized structure for making collective decisions. Leadership changes rapidly and may vary by activity; for example, leaders in drug selling may differ from leaders in "gangbanging." As with most groups, leadership is age-graded, although some older members may represent powerful role models. The type of gang leadership varies from gang to gang and by geographical area. Gangs in Chicago, for example, tend to have a more defined leadership structure than those in many western cities.

Two primary Federal criminal statutes are used to prosecute street gangs: the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act and the continuing criminal enterprise (CCE) statutes, part of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970. These statutes were enacted to address the conspiratorial nature of the street gang and to enable prosecutors to present evidence of multiple criminal acts committed by various gang members that proves a pattern of criminal activity by the enterprise or gang. In RICO prosecutions, evidence of acts of racketeering ("predicate acts")—such as drug distribution, any violent acts, witness tampering, mail or wire fraud, or illegal gambling—can be presented to the jury; thus, the full scope of the gang's criminal conduct can be demonstrated. Prosecuting these crimes individually would not convey a clear overall picture of the gang's criminal activity. The CCE statute is an excellent prosecutorial

(continued)

tool to combat gangs that have some form of defined leadership structure and are involved in drug distribution.

Prosecuting Street Gangs Under ETI

Normally, evidence developed in an investigation is presented to a prosecutor, who structures the indictment and thus the method of prosecution. Under the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI), a strategy originally devised by the FBI in 1981, this is not the case; the prosecution is structured from the inception of the investigation.

The first step in investigating any violent street gang is a review of the available intelligence base to estimate the group's structure, membership, and criminal activities. Then, a background investigation is conducted through agency file reviews, agency and public record checks, and by assigning informants in the group to check on the individual members and their criminal activities. At this stage, the investigator attempts to identify individual and group assets, as well as proprietary interests of the gang.

In the next phase, investigators seek to identify meeting places, methods of communication among gang members, and entities used to facilitate their criminal activities. This is done through the use of various investigative techniques. At this stage, the investigator evaluates and defines the criminal group, the enterprises that may be the investigative focus, and the potential predicate criminal acts.

Before the proactive investigative stage begins, consideration is given to determining which sanctions are appropriate and can be obtained and which type of legal relief will solve this particular problem. If every member of the group is identified and potentially prosecutable, criminal RICO prosecution and confinement will suffice. If the group has amassed assets, their identification for possible forfeiture should be included in the strategy. If criminal prosecution will not solve the problem, the civil provisions of the RICO statute should be applied.

Next, the question of whether to pursue an overt or covert investigation must be decided. In an overt investigation, the investigator interviews witnesses, subpoenas records, locates expert witnesses, and convenes a grand jury. The use of covert investigative techniques in the initial stages has proven to be more successful. While these techniques are being used, direct and circumstantial evidence must be recorded separately, based on the sanctions being pursued. Separate administrative systems must be established as a repository for evidence of the structure, membership, and purpose of each enterprise; assets must be identified for each individual and enterprise; illegal profit generation and criminal evidence of RICO predicate criminal acts must be identified; and support must be compiled for the projected civil relief. The predicate criminal acts, the defined enterprises, and the required civil sanctions must be continually reevaluated during the course of the investigation. When the criminal RICO indictment is structured, all assets subject to forfeiture must be identified. These assets must be frozen at the time of indictment so that they are not transferred and liquidated before they can be seized.

The Weisel Study

The conclusions of Dr. Weisel's report as they relate to the Logan Street, Syndo Mob, and Black Gangster Disciples gangs are reasonably consistent with investigative information developed by the FBI on these groups, but the report's findings on the Latin Kings are inconsistent with the FBI's investigative and criminal intelligence information. ETI would be an appropriate investigative approach for all four gangs, however, because a criminal enterprise need not have a "traditional" hierarchical organization and can be as simple as a group of individuals "associated in fact" who engage in a pattern of illegal activity.

Source: FBI Violent Crimes and Major Offenders Section, Criminal Investigation Division

Exhibit 3: Gang Participation in Criminal Activity, by City and Crime

	Chicago		San Diego	
Crime	BGDs (*n* = 26)	Latin Kings (*n* = 18)	Calle Treinta/ Red Steps (*n* = 20)	Lincoln Park/ Syndo Mob (*n* = 21)
Assault	96%	94%	95%	95%
Auto Theft	69	77	85	86
Burglary	73	65	75	95
Driveby Shooting	84	94	75	100
Crack Sale	85	53	70	100
Cocaine Sale	89	75	85	86
Marijuana Sale	85	94	95	95
Graffiti	65	88	80	91
Robbery	77	82	80	91
Shooting	81	42	95	91
Theft	65	88	85	91
Vandalism	65	77	80	86

Indeed, according to organizational theory, organizations operating in highly volatile environments are much more likely to be generalists than specialists (Katz and Kahn 1966; Meyer 1978). Generalist organizations can adapt more quickly to changing conditions and are more likely to survive than specialists because the latter must learn a new set of complex skills to create a new specialty (or "niche") under changing conditions. While organizational specialization may be sustained under conditions of short-term volatility, it will not be useful in the continuously volatile gang environment (Katz and Kahn 1966), in which there is ongoing competition with other gangs and a presumed high level of attention from police and other criminal justice organizations.[12] Such environmental volatility would likely discourage specialization both within and among gangs.

Organizations can also be classified by the extent of specialization of their individual members. Like the gangs they belonged to, the members of all four gangs studied reported participating in a wide range of criminal activities, from vandalism to drug sales (see exhibit 4). When *group* criminal activities were compared with *individual* criminal activities (exhibits 3 and 4), it was found that gang members participated substantially less in some of the gang's

Exhibit 4: Individual Participation by Gang Members in Criminal Activity, by City and Crime

	Chicago		San Diego	
	BGDs (*n* = 26)	Latin Kings (*n* = 18)	Calle Treinta/ Red Steps (*n* = 20)	Lincoln Park/ Syndo Mob (*n* = 21)
Motor Vehicle Theft	46%	47%	45%	48%
Assault	62	53	85	95
Burglary	30	41	35	62
Crack Sale	42	24	30	71
Cocaine Sale	52	41	45	29
Marijuana Sale	69	50	70	86
Graffiti	31	59	60	52
Robbery	31	29	40	67
Shooting	42	47	40	38
Theft	46	47	60	86
Vandalism	31	53	65	52

criminal activities than did the gang itself. This finding could reflect a respondent's reluctance to identify all of his individual criminal behavior,[13] but it also suggests that there are criminal activities in which some gang members participate but others do not.

All gang members reported participating in a wide range of criminal activities. A majority of all gang members reported that they had engaged in assaults (74 percent) and sold marijuana (68 percent). Nearly half had engaged in motor vehicle theft, theft, burglary, and vandalism.

The differences between the two cities in gang *member* participation in criminal activity were consistent with the differences in *gang* participation. Gang members in San Diego reported greater individual participation in almost all 11 crime types than did Chicago gang members. A large majority (90 percent) of San Diego gang members reported individual involvement in assault. San Diego gang members also reported greater involvement in assault and marijuana sales than gang members in Chicago. When members' responses from each city were combined, it was found that gang members in Chicago were more involved in cocaine sales and shootings than were gang members from San Diego. Gangs in the two cities reported similar rates of involvement in motor vehicle theft.

The breadth of criminal activities reported by individuals helps confirm the notion that most gang members are criminal generalists much like the gangs to which they belong. Just as generalist organizations adapt more quickly to changing environmental conditions, generalist gang members are inherently easier to replace than specialists. Because they report involvement in fewer types of crime, the Chicago gangs and their members appear to be slightly more specialized than the San Diego gangs and gang members.

Goal Orientation

Centrality of goals is a key and defining feature of formal organization (Parsons 1987; Weber 1947; Blau and Scott 1962; Katz and Kahn 1966; Stinchcombe 1965; Lippitt 1982). Organizations are established to attain certain goals and are structured to maximize their attainment. It is widely recognized, however, that organizational goals may be vague, changing, numerous, contradictory, and not always closely linked with the organization's day-to-day activities. In some forms of organization, the goals of individuals and those of the organization are consistent, and the former may be thoroughly integrated into the latter (Popielarz and McPherson 1995; Scott 1993).

Among the features of formal organization in the gangs Thrasher (1963) studied, he recognized that they were directed toward goals. According to Klein (1995a), their *members*, on the contrary, typically have a "rather low focus on group goals" because these goals may come into conflict with the individual needs of gang members. "Gangs," says Klein, "are not committees, ball teams, task forces, production teams, or research teams. The members are drawn to one another to fulfill individual needs, many shared and some conflicting: they do not gather to achieve a common, agreed-upon end" (1995a: 80). Yet group rewards, Klein contends, are an important individual motivation for joining a gang. These include status, companionship, excitement, and protection. Among individual motivations, gang members routinely join for a sense of "belonging" or of "family." Material rewards associated with group crime are also a factor in promoting gang membership.

Among gang members studied here there was strong evidence of organizational goals and purposefulness focused on making money.[14] These economic objectives were often described in quite varied terms, and organizational goals were often embedded in broader descriptions of the purpose of the gang. Many gang members showed evidence of integrating or blending the larger organizational objectives with their own individual needs. Among San

Diego gang members, moneymaking appeared incidental to the friendship and social networks. As San Diego gang members put it—

> We kick it together, smoke marijuana, maybe jack something. If we think we can make some money selling it, we will take it.
>
> Throughout the whole time [I've been in the gang] I was a party cat. . . . The one thing I did throughout the whole time was party. I always liked to party. Liked to have fun. If you are going to have fun you got to make your money. So you sell drugs or you do violent crimes to get money.
>
> We get together and have little picnics and things with the community. Sometimes we get together and set up moves to make on other gangs. When you go to other neighborhoods and they selling certain things we go and take theirs, we make moves. . . . We do more transactions, money transactions. We mainly making money. That is a main part of the gang, making the money. The riding on other neighborhoods and shooting and all that, that's part of the gang too but the main thing is getting our money.
>
> [We] smoke weed, sell dope, I would say that's about it that I know of. [We] have parties and stuff. . . . [We p]robably hang out, that's about it, make money.

In contrast, gang members from Chicago tended to describe their gangs as primarily focused on making money:

> Well, in my words, a gang ain't nothing but people come together to do crime and make money and be a family to each other. That's the original idea.
>
> A gang, nowadays, would be money making, make money.
>
> [A gang is] a bunch of brothers hooked up, trying to make money.
>
> [The gang is] really [about] making money, it's holding your own neighborhood so nobody can come into your neighborhood and try to take the bread out of your mouth.

But Chicago gang members also articulated the objectives of the gang in a broader way that emphasized the social and familial rewards of gang membership:

> A gang is a group of individuals bound together for a common purpose. [They are bound together] a lot of ways, socially, economically, emotionally sometimes.
>
> Basically [a gang is] a group of people with the same objectives, trying to reach for the same goals.

Gang members in Chicago and San Diego viewed their gangs as an opportunity for social interaction (including partying, "hanging out," getting women) and as a family, brotherhood, or support system. Gang members in both cities described the role of the gang as a means of protection from rivals, a means of survival, and a source of respect. Many gang members appear to seamlessly combine social interaction with making money: For San Diego gangs, social interaction, friendship, and self-protection appeared to be the primary purpose, and moneymaking was incidental or opportunistic. Although the concept of gang as brotherhood or family was also extremely important to the Chicago gangs, making money was their central organizational objective or defining feature.

Organizational Transformation: Consolidation and Splintering

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the formal organizational character of the gangs studied was the organizational transformation each had experienced over time.[15] Like other organizations, gangs are seldom static entities. Although the temporary gangs described by Thrasher (1963) typically disintegrated, the gangs in this study reflected patterns of consolidation (primarily through merger with, or acquisition of, smaller gangs), reorganization, and the splintering of larger gangs into spinoff gangs. Such findings are consistent with those of Thrasher, who noted that groups form and re-form over time.

Gang members' richly detailed descriptions of the organizational transformations that occurred in each of the gangs were evidence of both the tenacity and enduring nature of the gang and offered insights into its organizational growth or decline. One gang member described the merger that created the BGDs:

> [Black Gangster Disciple Nation, Black Gangsters, Disciples, and High Supreme Gangsters] actually was all brought together in 1981. Although you had the same members that came together, all these different gangs

> all came together under one name. It's like we'll take some of your doctrines, we'll take some of your doctrines to satiate everybody's upbringing, what they originally were, and bring them all together under one thing. . . . There was many different smaller organizations just in the process of being brought together. And then a couple of years later everybody was brought together under one law, under a one-people concept, all of us being the same thing.

Two other gang members told a similar story of merger and acquisition:

> Before I became a Black Disciple, I was a Rod; it was an extremely small organization and we converted over to GD's, to Black Gangster Disciples. . . . Disciples been around for ages. Like I said, in the beginning there was Devil Disciples. But the GD organization has been in existence since 1971.

> They were attempting to form a conglomerate. . . . [I]t was three organizations that come together and formed one big organization.

Unlike the Chicago gangs, which showed evidence of mergers, gangs in San Diego appeared to exhibit a pattern of splintering through the division of larger gangs and the creation of new, spinoff gangs. Logan gang members described the evolution of their gang this way:

> Thirtieth Street was originally all of Logan. Then along came another 'hood called Logan Trece—another little gang. So they had to get permission from 30th to start their little gang. Give them a little part of Logan. So Red Steps came along and asked them too. So Red Steps and Logan Trece to gain some respect from other gangs, they had to start fighting and all that. So that's where it all started.

> There is two more [gangs] in Logan Heights. There is Red Steps and Trece Logan Heights. But back in the old days, it used to just be Logan. But as time went by, they started separating because of freeways getting built and boundaries started separating them apart. But they are still united though. Except there is always family disputes between the different family cliques.

Spergel (1990: 204) believes that the reason for splintering is "competition between cliques [within the gang]." Such competition, he wrote, "may be a central dynamic leading to the gang splitting into factions or separate gangs." It seems reasonable that external pressures—law enforcement, neighborhood dynamics, competition with other gangs—and other "pull" factors could also splinter the gang. These same dynamics could also lead small gangs to join forces to provide protection or to form economic alliances.

The notion of gang mergers is occasionally mentioned in the gang literature but has not been fully discussed. During the 2-year period in which Huff (1989) studied gangs in two Ohio cities, the number of gangs in Cleveland declined from 50 separately named gangs to 15 or 20; in Columbus, the number of gangs dropped from 20 to 15 during the course of the study. Mergers accounted for the reduction in the number of gangs, according to Huff, although some gangs dissolved and some groups originally identified as gangs may have actually been splinter groups rather than gangs. While mergers may result in larger gangs (that is, more gang members in a gang), such an increase in size does not necessarily take place. Mergers may serve only to offset attrition of gang members, resulting in no net increase in gang size.

As Monti (1993) noted, gang cliques and sets can combine and reassemble in different ways over time; a portion of the gangs he studied in St. Louis were "absorbed" into other gangs during a 2-year period. The growth of the Blackstone Rangers in Chicago was described by Sale (1971) as occurring through takeovers of existing gangs and "renovation" of cliques. The gang's original street clique clashed with rival gangs and then later combined with them. The result, after 10 years, was a much larger version of the Blackstone Rangers. The observation that the merger is an organizational feature of contemporary gangs and occurs over time is an accepted but poorly understood dimension of the organizational growth of gangs.

Similarly, there has been little discussion in the field of gang research of splintering, although there is recognition that cliques or subsets of gangs have a life of their own. Spergel et al. (1991) reported that internal competition within the gang may cause it to split into factions or form a separate gang. He also suggested that gangs might splinter and dissolve if more criminal opportunities become available to members through drug trafficking gangs or other criminal groups. According to Goldstein and Huff (1993), there is serious intragang rivalry between sets within the Bloods or the Crips in Los Angeles, especially when the profits of drug dealing are at issue. They note that there can be as much violence between different sets of the same gang as between rival gangs, a fact that may contribute to further splintering of the gang. Decker (1996) described how the rise of violence in larger gangs can result in the emergence of splinter gangs. Monti (1993) suggested that when gangs reach a certain size, they would split when friction occurred among members and remained unsettled. This splintering occurs because, when the gang is small, the gang can exercise cohesion and control through face-to-face personal interactions (Kornhauser 1978), but large increases in the size of individual gangs appear to lead to breaches within gangs, resulting in more gangs in a jurisdiction.

The concepts of gang merger and splintering can be framed within organizational theory. Organizational theory holds that populations of organizations of a similar form and function tend to reach an equilibrium. Over time, some organizations die out and others form—some through schism, which occurs when subgroups break away to create a new organization. The process continues until the number of organizations is stable (Tucker et al. 1988; Hannan and Freeman 1987; Hannan and Carroll 1992). Historically, this phenomenon is driven by organizational creation and failure—two processes that are much more common than adaptation.

Summary of Gang Member Interviews

The gang members interviewed in this study provided richly textured descriptions of the character of their gangs. Framed in an organizational context, their narratives illuminate and clarify police observations about gang size, gang activities, and changes in gangs over time. The evidence from these interviews demonstrates that the four gangs studied have been in existence for many years and have experienced major organizational changes. Changes in gang name and size are the most observable indications of these organizational shifts. The generalist orientation of the gangs and their members may have contributed to their survival through periods of organizational upheaval and environmental uncertainty.

Unexpected Agreement

It might be expected that the views of police and gang members would be quite divergent on issues such as the nature of gang leadership and activities. This study, however, did not identify any major differences. In large part, police descriptions of gangs were not inconsistent with those of gang members. Indeed, the interviews with gang members tended to elaborate on police observations of the variation within and among gangs. For the most part, the police did not tend to stereotype gangs; they did not, for example, describe them as showing evidence of formal organization and hierarchy where this was not well established. Nor did the police tend to see role and organizational specialization within gangs. Instead, they recognized a wide range of gang types, identified different structures within different gangs, and described a wide range of behaviors of gangs and gang members. In the interviews, gang members confirmed and elaborated on these observations.

It is worth noting that both police and gang members indicated that the large and enduring gangs examined in this study exhibited *some* distinctive features of formal organizations. There was little evidence, however, that their structure is highly bureaucratic—an anomaly, according to organizational theory. Despite their large size and organizational longevity, of the four gangs examined, in only two was there evidence of the bureaucratic structure of large organizations (leadership, membership levels, regular meetings, specialization, and written rules). Only one gang exhibited the more elaborate features of traditional organized crime groups—relationships with other gangs nationwide (including prison gangs), incursion into legitimate businesses, and involvement in political activities (Decker, Bynum, and Weisel 1998). In all four gangs, however, there was some evidence of formal organization, such as organizational continuity and an orientation toward goals.

The gangs studied here appear to represent a fundamentally different form of organization, one that can be described as adaptive or organic rather than bureaucratic. These forms of organization have also been called "federations, networks, clusters, cross-functional teams, lattices, modules, matrices, almost anything but pyramids" (Bennis 1993).[16]

In stark contrast to the myriad literature on bureaucratic organizations, there have been few studies of organic organizations—and thus there is a dearth of descriptions of this form even among organizations such as legitimate businesses. An examination of the recognized features of the organic-adaptive model, however, suggests that the gangs studied here feature the attributes associated predominantly with this form of organization. These include an emphasis on individual goals concurrent with organizational goals, diffuse leadership, the active role of subgroups, a generalist orientation, persistence in a volatile environment, and continuity despite the absence of hierarchy. Adaptive or organic organizations thrive in a volatile or changing environment, and organizations that survive under such conditions are more likely to maintain multipurpose and flexible structures, with flexible leadership and little differentiation among member roles (Meyer 1978; Burns and Stalker 1961).

Despite some evidence of bureaucratic features in the gangs studied, the results of the interviews with gang members make it difficult to support the hypothesis that these gangs have evolved into formal organizations mirroring traditional organized crime.[17] Although the Chicago gangs have some explicit features of formal organizations, on other dimensions, the evidence is less clear: Group and role specialization, for example, appear minimal.

Their organizational continuity and their expansion and membership growth suggest that these four groups can be considered successful organizations. They have endured and thrived at times when environmental exigencies might have logically selected against them. Their survival and growth have been punctuated by organizational changes—mergers, splintering, consolidation, and other organizational dynamics. These changes have been responsible for the gangs' growth to their current, large size.

The substantial organizational change these gangs experienced is consistent with organizational theories that see social organizations as not static but changing in important ways, adapting to changing environmental conditions. According to one widely held notion, organizations proceed through temporal and sequential stages of development, a process commonly known as the organizational life cycle. The gangs in this study—with their patterns of consolidation and fragmentation—showed clear evidence of such a process. According to Klein (1995a), the proliferation of gangs in the 1980s resulted from the establishment of many small, autonomous organizations. The result was that gangs were large in number but small in size. As Klein points out, however, "there are a lot of acorns out there that could become stable, traditional oaks" (p. 104). In other words, small, autonomous gangs can grow into stable, traditional, and much larger gangs, the latter, of course, being of far greater concern to the public and to police.

Life cycles of gangs suggest that smaller, socially oriented gangs can evolve into more serious gangs, often merging or aligning with larger or more organized gangs for protection. While transformation into large, networked gangs such as the BGDs is clearly an exception, for that gang, the merger and acquisition process was a major contribution to its growth. Of course, gangs are also growing larger for a number of reasons, among them that the age range is expanding, with members remaining in the gang longer and the gang retaining members who move outside the neighborhood.

Size will continue to be a major factor in predicting the extent of organization in a gang. The largest gang in this study showed the clearest evidence of bureaucratic organizational features, suggesting the need for a systematic process for counting gangs and their members and for close attention to changes that affect the number and size of gangs in a specific area or jurisdiction. Klein (1995b) describes the cyclical processes of the seasonal and epochal variations in gang activity (crime) through which gangs proceed. Many of these epochal cycles, Klein believes, are city-specific and may reflect upturns and downturns in sub-areas and neighborhoods within cities. This view, of course, suggests that cities or counties are the relevant population boundary for monitoring gang crime and changes in the size and number of gangs. As Klein (1995b) states, aggregate numbers of gangs, gang members, and gang crime tend to mask important changes in gangs that occur at smaller geographic levels.

Implications for Police Practice

For the police, monitoring the growth of individual gangs or of organizational changes taking place among or within gangs in a jurisdiction provides insights that can aid in developing effective responses to gang problems. Differences among gang types and among specific gangs—especially organizational differences such as patterns of leadership, membership age, size, duration, criminal involvement, and so forth—have significant law enforcement implications. Hierarchical or organized crime models that target gang leadership by using vertical prosecution and applying Federal statutes[18] may be appropriate for law enforcement agencies or prosecutors that focus on the few gangs having particularly distinctive leadership patterns. This model is probably not useful for addressing the vast majority of the country's street gangs. Spergel (1990), for example, has warned against exaggerating the organized character of gangs. Such exaggeration may be a byproduct of an organized crime model that targets gang leadership, which tends to characterize *most* gangs by the troublesome features of a few gangs. Indeed, the present study indicates that street gangs do not necessarily progress into highly organized crime organizations. Organizational processes, however, may contribute to marked increases in gang size, influencing the structure, operations, and relationships of some gangs.

The criminal versatility of the gangs and gang members observed in this study suggests that law enforcement efforts that target particular criminal behavior will work primarily for highly specialized gangs. Most gangs are not. Even the most troublesome gangs in this study appeared to be highly adaptive generalists. Most research suggests that rather than employing generic antigang strategies, approaches to gang problems should be framed very narrowly to address identified problems of concern to communities and police (e.g., Sherman et al. 1998; Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997).

Gangs and gang-related problems vary. Indeed, Spergel's model requires that law enforcement agencies carefully assess *local* problems before implementing any antigang strategy. Because there have been few useful evaluations of such strategies, there is a need for rigorous evaluations, which could help move the country to more quickly identify the most effective methods for solving the various gang problems.

Police have tried a wide variety of measures to address the problem of gangs at the local level. They have employed situational crime prevention, for example, altering the flow of vehicular traffic to reduce gang-related violence[19]; enforcing antiloitering statutes to keep gangs from intimidating and menacing community members (Regini 1998); using civil injunctions to keep gang members out of areas where they cause trouble (Cameron and Skipper 1997; Gibeaut 1998; Regini 1998); setting up traffic checkpoints (Crawford 1998); carrying out aggressive curfew and truancy enforcement (Fritsch, Caeti, and Taylor 1999); and cracking down on weapons violations, often using Federal laws that impose stiffer penalties. Some jurisdictions have used a technique known as "lever pulling," targeting specific chronic offenders with warrants, close supervision of probation conditions, and other measures.[20]

Many of these law enforcement approaches have been integrated into community or problem-oriented approaches to gangs. The approaches also include mediation, situational crime prevention, working with families, and other strategies (Sampson and Scott 2000; Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997). Klein (1997) warns that policing that involves only enforcement will solidify gangs by increasing cohesion among gang members. Policing strategies are most effective when teamed with intervention programs such as providing economic opportunities, job training, remedial education, and other services and community involvement (see, for example, Spergel 1995; Spergel et al. 1991). These diverse strategies may be necessary to deal with highly versatile and adaptive gangs.

At the turn of the 21st century, a wide variety of organizations fall under the umbrella category of "gangs." One type or size of criminal organization may differ from another only by a matter of degree. Howell and Decker

(1999) distinguish between drug gangs and street gangs, and between youth gangs and adult criminal organizations. These distinctions (and others) will have the most value when employed at the local level. As Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist (forthcoming) point out, their changing nature makes it increasingly difficult to categorize and characterize them. These authors describe the new gang form as a hybrid organization. Even 70 years ago, Thrasher (1963 [1927]) recognized that the distinctions between gangs and other criminal organizations crime were rather illusory. There is, according to Thrasher, "no hard and fast dividing line between predatory gang boys and criminal groups of younger and older adults. They merge into each other by imperceptible gradations." It is important to identify and monitor the inherent distinctions and similarities among different criminal organizations within jurisdictions, since these elements reflect local conditions, criminal opportunity, and other explanatory variables. Such an examination will aid in building an accurate perception of local problems and will be useful in avoiding the stereotypes and overreaction that may lead to well-intentioned but misguided policies and practices. Just such a continued examination may aid in building a corpus of information that will offer greater insight into the form and structure—and inherent variation—of contemporary gangs.

Notes

1. Not all gangs "mature"; indeed, many disintegrate. Some gang researchers have described this maturation process. Knox (1994) characterizes gangs by their stage of development, from pre-gang to emergent gang, from crystallized gang to formalized gangs, suggesting that gangs move from one category to another as they grow larger and more like a formal organization. Thrasher described the transformation of gangs to a solidified form as a function of longevity, conflict, and the age of their members (1963: 47–62).

2. Fagan (1989) examined gang participation in criminal activity and drugs, classifying gangs as party gangs, which engage in few nondrug criminal behaviors except vandalism; social gangs, which engage in few delinquent activities; delinquent gangs, which engage in violent and property crime but few drug sales; and organized gangs, which are extensively involved in the sale and use of drugs along with predatory crime. Other typologies of gangs based on police information have taken different approaches. For example, Maxson and Klein (1995) identified common structures for 59 gangs and looked at how offending was related to these structures. As

these authors note, however, "police attend far more to gang crime than gang structure," leading the present study to focus on gang behaviors as an organizing characteristic.

3. Surveys were addressed to police chiefs, who were asked to have it completed by the person in the department most knowledgeable about gangs. As a result, respondents varied from police chiefs to investigations commanders to gang or youth unit supervisors. Since populations served by respondents varied from 50,000 to more than 3 million, it seemed appropriate that knowledgeable police respondents could be identified at different levels of different organizations. The technique of surveying the police chief is also used by the National Youth Gang Survey (see Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1999).

4. The higher response rate from larger police departments likely reflects the greater prevalence of gangs in large jurisdictions; smaller jurisdictions with few or no gangs were probably less likely to respond to the survey.

5. Estimates of numbers of gangs and gang members vary by source. City-level estimates were provided by the National Youth Gang Center based on annual surveys conducted in 1996–1999.

6. Federal and local law enforcement sources were used to identify the most organized gangs in each city. General gang history was provided by local police sources.

7. In contrast to local law enforcement, which focuses on the criminal *behavior* of individual gang members, Federal responses to gangs, such as the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force, appear to focus on the *structure* of gangs, especially leadership, using tools such as Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statutes to dismantle gangs. Indeed, the stated policy of the FBI is to address violent street gangs through long-term, proactive investigations by concentrating on criminal enterprise and conspiracy. See Freeh (1999) and the sidebar "The FBI's Enterprise Theory of Investigation" for a more detailed description of the FBI's work on gangs and organized crime.

8. Fagan (1989) notes that social gangs accounted for 28 percent of all gangs; party gangs accounted for 7 percent; serious delinquents constituted 37 percent; and "organization"-type gangs represented 28 percent of all gangs. These proportions varied, however, from one city to

another. In Chicago, gangs were predominantly serious delinquents and organized gangs; in Los Angeles, gangs were social (38 percent) and serious delinquents (36 percent), whereas San Diego gangs consisted of more serious delinquents (39 percent) and organized gangs (31 percent).

9. Klein (1995) called this versatility "cafeteria style" crime, a type in which gang members combine opportunistic crime with crime requiring more planning. It should be noted that participation of the gang in crime is different from participation of individual gang members in crime; the former term aggregates activities of gang members, the latter reflects individual behavior. Both concepts of criminal activity are examined in this study.

10. Although this study revealed higher levels of criminal versatility in serious gangs, the findings of this study are parallel with findings about criminal activity of youth gangs in the National Youth Gang Survey (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1999). Police participants in the youth gang survey reported criminal versatility among gang members, with high involvement by youth gang members in aggravated assault, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and burglary. Slightly more than one-fourth of all NYGS respondents reported high involvement by gang members in those crimes. If youth gangs evolved into the more serious criminal gangs examined in this study, one would anticipate substantial increases in assaults, robbery, theft, and burglary and some increase in motor vehicle theft.

11. An earlier report of the findings from this study described the extent to which these organizational characteristics were present in these four gangs (Decker, Bynum, and Weisel 1998).

12. One respondent described the volatile environment as follows: "Standing on the street corner and talking and sitting there getting high all day, you make plenty of money, I'm not gonna lie about that, but it gets tiresome always looking for the police too or looking for somebody that is gonna try to kill you for your money."

13. Taylor (1990a) and Joe (1993) reported that older gang respondents minimized gang activity, and Goldstein (1991) noted that gang members may exaggerate or hide information. Although the gang members interviewed for this study appeared to have been mostly honest in their

responses, it seems reasonable to assume that many would be disinclined to own up to the range of their own criminal activity.

14. Gang members were asked to define a gang, to describe the purpose of the gang (including why they joined the gang), and to describe what is good about being in a gang.

15. Gang members were asked to tell interviewers about the history of their gang.

16. Similar terms include negotiated order, federation, loosely coupled system, temporary system, organic-adaptive organization, coalition, external model, post-bureaucracy, colleague model, interactive organization, network, and blended or open organization.

17. As with contemporary gangs, there is a great deal of debate about the definition and degree of organization of organized crime. See Maltz (1985) and Kenney and Finckenauer (1995) for a discussion of this issue as it relates to organized crime.

18. Limitations of these strategies are described by Johnson, Webster, and Connors (1995) and Miethe and McCorkle (1997).

19. See Lasley (1998) for a discussion of Operation Cul de Sac, an example of a situational crime prevention tactic.

20. "Lever pulling" and RICO statutes were employed in a widely publicized reduction of violence program in Boston. See Kennedy (1997).

References

Bennis, Warren G. 1993. *Beyond Bureaucracy: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Blau, Peter M., and W. Richard Scott. 1962. *Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co.

Bureau of Justice Assistance. 1997. *Addressing Community Gang Problems: A Model for Problem Solving*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. NCJ 156059.

Burns, Tom, and G.M. Stalker. 1961. *The Management of Innovation*, London: Tavistock.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Cameron, Jeffrey R., and John Skipper 1997. "The Civil Injunction: A Preemptive Strike Against Gangs," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 66(11): 12–15.

Crawford, Kimberly A. 1998. "Checkpoints: Fourth Amendment Implications of Limiting Access to High Crime Areas," *Law Enforcement Bulletin* 67(3): 27–32.

Decker, Scott. 1996. "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," *Justice Quarterly*, 13(2): 243–264.

Decker, Scott H., Timothy S. Bynum, and Deborah Lamm Weisel. 1998. "A Tale of Two Cities: Gangs as Organized Crime Groups," *Justice Quarterly* 15(3): 395–425.

Fagan, Jeffrey. 1989. "The Social Organization of Drug Use and Drug Dealing Among Urban Gangs," *Criminology* 27(4): 633–667.

Freeh, Louis J. 1999. "Ensuring Public Safety and National Security Under the Rule of Law: A Report to the American People on the Work of the FBI 1993–1998," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Fritsch, E.J., T.J. Caeti, and R.W. Taylor. 1999. "Gang Suppression Through Saturation Patrol, Aggressive Curfew, and Truancy Enforcement: A Quasi-Experimental Test of the Dallas Anti-Gang Initiative," *Crime and Delinquency* 45(1): 122–139.

Gibeaut, John. 1998. "Gang Busters," *ABA Journal*, 84(January): 64–68.

Goldstein, Arnold P. and C. Ronald Huff, eds. 1993. *The Gang Intervention Handbook*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Greiner, Larry E. 1972. "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow," *Harvard Business Review*, 50(July–August): 37–46.

Hannan, Michael T., and Glenn R. Carroll. 1992. *Dynamics of Organizational Populations: Density, Legitimation, and Competition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hannan, Michael T., and John Freeman. 1987. "The Ecology of Organizational Founding: American Labor Unions, 1836–1985," *American Journal of Sociology* 92(4): 910–43.

Howell, James C., and Scott H. Decker. 1999. "The Youth Gangs, Drugs and Violence Connection," *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. January. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Huff, C. Ronald. 1989. "Youth Gangs and Public Policy," *Crime and Delinquency* 35(4): 524–537.

Jackson, Patrick, with Cary Rudman. 1993. "Moral Panic and the Response to Gangs in California," in *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States*, ed. Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti. Albany: State University of New York Press: 257–275.

Jankowski, Martín Sánchez. 1991. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Joe, Karen. 1993. "Issues in Accessing and Studying Ethnic Youth Gangs," *Gang Journal* 1(2): 25–36.

Johnson, Claire, Barbara Webster, and Edward Connors. 1995. *Prosecuting Gangs: A National Assessment*. Research in Brief. February. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 151785.

Katz, Daniel, and Robert L. Kahn. 1966. *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Kennedy, David M. 1997. "Pulling Levers: Chronic Offenders, High-Crime Settings, and a Theory of Prevention," *Valparaiso University Law Review* 31(2): 449–484.

Kenney, Dennis Jay, and James O. Finckenauer. 1995. *Organized Crime in America*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Kimberly, John R., Robert H. Miles, and Associates, eds. 1980. *The Organizational Life Cycle: Issues in the Creation, Transformation, and Decline of Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Klein, Malcolm W. 1995a. *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence and Control*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1995b. "Street Gang Cycles," in *Crime*, ed. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies Press.

———. 1997. "The Problem of Street Gangs and Problem-Oriented Policing," in *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems Critical Issues and Making POP Work*, ed. Tara O'Connor Shelley and Anne C. Grant. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum: 57–88.

Knox, George W. 1994. *An Introduction to Gangs*. Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press.

Kornhauser, Ruth Rosner. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lasley, James. 1998. *"Designing Out" Gang Homicides and Street Assaults*. Research in Brief. November. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 173398.

Lippitt, Gordon L. 1982. *Organization Renewal: A Holistic Approach to Organization Development*, 2nd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Maltz, Michael. 1985. "Toward Defining Organized Crime," in *The Politics and Economics of Organized Crime*, ed. Herbert E. Alexander and Gerald E. Caiden. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath: 21–35.

Maxson, Cheryl, and Malcolm Klein. 1995. "Investigating Gang Structures," *Journal of Gang Research* 3(1): 33–40.

McCorkle, Richard C., and Terance D. Miethe. 1998. "Political and Organizational Response to Gangs: An Examination of a 'Moral Panic' in Nevada," *Justice Quarterly* 15(1): 41–64.

Meyer, John W. 1978. "Strategies for Further Research: Varieties of Environmental Variation," in *Environments and Organizations*, ed. Marshall W. Meyer and Associates. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: 352–393.

Miethe, Terance D., and Richard C. McCorkle. 1997. "Evaluating Nevada's Anti-Gang Legislation and Gang Prosecution Units," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 171961.

Monti, Daniel J. 1993. "Origins and Problems of Gang Research in the United States," in *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States*, ed. Scott Cummings and Daniel J. Monti. Albany: State University of New York Press: 3–25.

68

Moore, John P., and Ivan L. Cook. 1999. *Highlights of the 1998 National Youth Gang Survey.* OJJDP Fact Sheet No. 123. December. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. FS–99123.

National Drug Intelligence Center. 1998. *Street Gangs '98: National Street Gang Survey Report—1998.* Johnstown, PA: National Drug Intelligence Center.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 1999. *1997 National Youth Gang Survey: Summary.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 178891.

Parsons, Talcott. 1987. "Suggestions for a Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations," in *Classics of Organization Theory*, 2nd ed., ed. Jay M. Shafritz and J. Steven Ott. Chicago: Dorsey Press: 132–146.

Pennell, S., E. Evans, R. Melton, and S. Hinson. 1994. *Down for the Set: Describing and Defining Gangs in San Diego.* San Diego: San Diego Association of Governments, Criminal Justice Research Unit.

Popielarz, Pamela A., and J. Miller McPherson. 1995. "On the Edge or In Between: Niche Position, Niche Overlap, and the Duration of Voluntary Association Memberships," *American Journal of Sociology* 101(3): 698–720.

Regini, Lisa A. 1998. "Combating Gangs: The Need for Innovation," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 67(2): 25–32.

Sale, R.T. 1971. *The Blackstone Rangers: A Reporter's Account of Time Spent with the Street Gang on Chicago's South Side.* New York: Random House.

Sampson, Rana, and Michael S. Scott. 2000. *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem Solving.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. NCJ 181243.

Scott, W. Richard. 1993. *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn Bushway. 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, A Report to the United States Congress.*

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 165366.

Simmel, Georg. 1902–3. "The Number of Members as Determining the Sociological Form of Groups, I and II," *The American Journal of Sociology* 8:1–46; 138–96.

Spergel, Irving A. 1990. "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change," in *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, ed. Michael Tonry and Norval Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1995. *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Spergel, Irving A., with G. David Curry, Ron Chance, Candice Kane, Ruth E. Ross, Alba Alexander, Pamela Rodriguez, Deeda Seed, Edwina Simmons, and Sandra Oh. 1991. *Youth Gangs: Problem and Response.* Chicago: School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago.

Starbuck, David, James C. Howell, and Donna J. Lindquist (forthcoming). *Hybrids and Other Modern Gangs*, OJJDP Bulletin, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Starbuck, William H. 1965. "Organizational Growth and Development," in *Handbook of Organizations*, ed. James G. March. Chicago: Rand McNally: 451–533.

Staw, Barry M., and L.L. Cummings, eds. 1990. *The Evolution and Adaptation of Organizations.* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1965. "Social Structure and Organizations," in *Handbook of Organizations*, ed. James G. March. Chicago: Rand McNally: 153–193.

Thrasher, Frederic M. 1963. *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (originally published in 1927).

Tucker, David J., Jitendra V. Singh, Agnes G. Meinhard, and Robert J. House. 1988. "Ecological and Institutional Sources of Change in Organizational Populations," in *Ecological Models of Organizations*, ed. Glenn R. Carroll. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger: 127–151.

Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons. New York: The Free Press.

Zatz, Marjorie S. 1987. "Chicano Youth Gangs and Crime: The Creation of a Moral Panic," *Contemporary Crises* 11: 129–158.

Chapter 3

Young Women in Street Gangs: Risk Factors, Delinquency, and Victimization Risk

Jody Miller, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Missouri–St. Louis

Acknowledgments

The research presented in this chapter was supported under award 92-IJ-CX-0005 from the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

Abstract

This study addresses the extent of young women's involvement in gangs, the reasons for joining, and what their experiences have been. Two cities were selected as the study sites: St. Louis, where gang emergence paralleled deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, and Columbus, Ohio, where conditions are conducive to the emergence of gangs despite a vibrant economy. Research has shown that young women join gangs to solve myriad problems in their lives, but gang involvement tends to exacerbate the situation, increasing the likelihood they will engage in delinquency and exposing them to victimization by rival gangs and fellow gang members. The current study confirmed this, revealing that the neighborhood context, the existence of severe family problems (such as drug addiction), and having gang-involved family members are risk factors for membership. It was no surprise that female gang members were more prone to delinquency than nongang members. Although there was no difference between the two cities in rates of serious delinquency, female gang members in Columbus tended to commit delinquent acts more frequently. Gang involvement also increased the risk of being exposed to violence or victimized; nevertheless, many young women described gang membership as providing a sense of empowerment and a measure of protection. Prevention would optimally focus on girls exposed to the risk factors identified here. And because young women begin associating with gang members when relatively young, prevention would best begin early in life. Gender-specific interventions may sometimes be useful, but some programming for young men may be applicable to young women.

Scholarly concern with young women's gang involvement has grown in recent years, not only because of the enormous growth in gangs and gang research over the past decades, but also because of the expansion of feminist criminology. Recent estimates suggest that more than 1,000 cities and towns nationwide have reported gangs in their communities—more than five times the number reported in 1980 (Klein 1995; Maxson et al. 1995). As more researchers have attempted to understand this phenomenon, feminist scholars have insisted that gender be considered as part of the research equation (Campbell 1990; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Messerschmidt 1995; Moore 1991). As a result, more is known about girls' experiences within gangs today than at any point in history, including the heyday of gang studies in the 1960s (see, e.g., Klein 1971; Short and Strodtbeck 1965).

Recent estimates also suggest that female participation in gangs is fairly widespread. Although official sources continue to underestimate the extent of female gang membership,[1] survey research indicates that it is relatively extensive, particularly in early adolescence, with the percentage of young women in gangs only slightly below that of young men. For instance, the Rochester Youth Development Study, based on a stratified sample of youths in high-risk, high-crime neighborhoods, found that 22 percent of females, compared with 18 percent of males, claimed to be gang members (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993). Later evidence from this longitudinal study suggests that girls tend to remain gang members for a shorter time than boys do, with peak involvement in the eighth and ninth grades (Thornberry 1999). Based on a sample of eighth graders in 11 cities, Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) report that 14 percent of males and 8 percent of females in their study were members of gangs. Young women are estimated to comprise between 20 and 46 percent of all gang members (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Moore 1991; Winfree et al. 1992).

Drawn from a larger study of female gang involvement in two Midwestern cities (see Miller 2001), this chapter reports findings on the following issues:

- Why young women join gangs.
- The extent of young women's involvement in gang-related delinquency.
- Victimization risks associated with young women's participation in gangs.

These findings are discussed in the context of recent research on female gang involvement and will highlight the salience of gender in shaping young women's gang experiences.

Methods

This project incorporates several research strategies, including the use of multiple methodologies and a comparative study design. The work is primarily based on survey and indepth interviews with female gang members in Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri, but it also includes survey interviews with girls from the same communities who are not gang members. In all, 94 young women were interviewed for the project: 48 who were gang members (21 from Columbus and 27 from St. Louis) and 46 (25 from Columbus and 21 from St. Louis) who were not. Interviewing girls in Columbus and St. Louis made it possible to explore variations that emerged in different geographical settings, while interviews with at-risk young women not in gangs provided useful comparative information on differences in life experiences that help explain why some girls join gangs while others in the same communities do not. The goal of this project was to improve understanding of girls' gang involvement—why they join gangs, the nature of their gangs and gang life, and the meaning of gang involvement—focusing particularly on how gender shapes these issues.

Respondents ranged in age from 12 to 20, with 80 percent between the ages of 14 and 17. The mean age of gang members was 15.3, compared with 15.2 for nonmembers. Most of the young women participating in the study were African-American (81 percent of gang members and 72 percent of nonmembers). Four gang members and 6 nonmembers described themselves as biracial or multiracial, and 12 girls (5 gang members, or 10 percent, and 7 nonmembers, or 15 percent, all from Columbus) were white. Interviews in Columbus began in early 1995 and were finished in early 1996; interviews in St. Louis began in the spring of 1997 and were completed that fall.

Young women were recruited to participate in the project with the cooperation of several organizations working with at-risk youths. These included the local juvenile detention facility in both cities, a shelter care facility for girls in Columbus, and schools and local community agencies in both cities; in addition, one young woman was referred by a friend. The interviews were voluntary, with respondents promised strict confidentiality, and were conducted primarily in private offices, empty classrooms, interview rooms, or secluded spots in visiting rooms, with a handful conducted in respondents' homes. In Columbus, girls were paid $10 per interview; in St. Louis, they were paid $10 per survey and $10 or $20 for each indepth interview, depending on the site.

Because sampling was purposive (i.e., not random), the representativeness of the sample is unknown (see Glassner and Carpenter 1985). Cooperation from agency personnel generally is successful for accessing gang members (see Bowker et al. 1980; Fagan 1989; Short and Strodtbeck 1965), although these referrals pose the problem of targeting only youths officially labeled as gang members. The comparative design of the original research mitigated this problem, however. Though the sample came from agencies working with young women, agencies working with gang members were not targeted, nor was there any attempt to generate a pool of known gang members. Instead, agency personnel were asked for references to girls they believed to be involved in gangs and to girls living in neighborhoods where they might have gang contact. Each respondent participated in an extensive survey, during which she was asked if she was involved in a gang. Girls were identified as gang members through self-nomination—in short, they were classified as gang members if they said that they were.[2]

Young women who identified themselves as gang members were asked a series of questions about their gang during the survey, including what the gang was like, how it was structured, what members did, and how and why they became involved. They were then asked to participate in a followup interview, which was completed just after the survey or within a few days. The indepth interviews were semistructured, with open-ended questions; all but one were audiotaped. These interviews have made it possible to gain a greater understanding of gang life from the perspective of female gang members (see Glassner and Loughlin 1987; Miller and Glassner 1997).

The indepth interviews were structured around several groups of questions and allowed considerable probing. First discussed were when and how respondents became involved in gangs and what was going on in their lives at the time. Discussion then turned to the gang's structure—its history, size, leadership, and organization—and their place within it. The next series of questions addressed gender within the gang: for example, how females got involved, what activities they engaged in and whether these resembled the males' activities, and what kind of males and females had the most influence in the gang and why. The next series of questions explored gang involvement more generally: what being in the gang meant, what gang members did together, and so on. Participants were then asked how safe or dangerous they felt gang membership was, and how they dealt with risk. At the end of the interview, girls were asked to speculate about why people their age joined gangs, what they liked or disliked about being in the gang and have learned from that experience, and what they liked best about themselves. This format was followed for each interview, although additional topics that arose during the interview were pursued as well.

Study Settings

Since the 1980s, gangs have emerged in many cities where they had not been observed before. Sites chosen for this study were based on the author's concern with female gang involvement in these "emergent" gang cities and a desire to study gangs in cities that offered an interesting comparison because of their differences: A city that fit the literature's dominant view of gang proliferation based on socioeconomic shifts (see, e.g., Hagedorn 1998; Klein 1995) was compared with one that seemed to challenge this view. Maxson and colleagues' (1995) national gang migration survey provided an initial pool of Midwestern cities with emergent gang problems; social and economic indicators from the 1990 U.S. Census were then used in choosing the final sites.

Many scholars have focused on compelling evidence that much of the growth in gangs in recent decades has been spurred by deteriorating economic conditions caused by structural changes brought about by deindustrialization (see Hagedorn 1991, 1998; Huff 1989; Klein 1995). These changes have resulted in the growth of what scholars refer to as an urban "underclass"—disproportionately poor African-Americans and Latinos living in conditions of entrenched poverty in inner-city communities. These communities are experiencing intense racial and economic segregation and isolation, the outmigration of middle-class families, and a precipitious decline in social services for those left behind (see Moore and Pinderhughes 1993; Sampson and Wilson 1995). The resulting lack of alternatives and sense of hopelessness are believed to have contributed to the growth of gangs in many cities; scholars see the gang as a means for inner-city youths to adapt to the oppressive conditions imposed by their environments.

St. Louis fits this explanation very well. Its experiences are typical of the urban distress facing many Midwestern cities affected by considerable deindustrialization and population loss in the past several decades (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; see Wilson 1987, 1996 for an overview). These problems are exacerbated by racial inequality. In 1990, African-Americans made up 47.5 percent of the population of St. Louis (Community Development Agency 1993), one of the 10 most racially segregated cities in the United States (Rusk 1995). Moreover, there are considerable gaps in income and poverty and unemployment rates between the city's African-Americans and whites.

In contrast, based on city-level indicators, Columbus appears an atypical site for gangs. It is one of the few Midwestern cities that has continued to thrive during periods of overall decline and has experienced continuous economic and population growth since the 1950s (Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission 1995; Rusk 1995). Columbus is also much less racially diverse than St. Louis, with African-Americans constituting 22.6 percent of the city's population.[3] Despite its overall economic vibrancy, however, the city has conditions conducive to the emergence of gangs (Huff 1990, 1998). There remain substantial pockets of impoverished neighborhoods with high concentrations of African-Americans. While the median household income for African-Americans is nearly $6,000 higher in Columbus than in St. Louis, the racial disparity in each city is similar—African-Americans' median income is about 60 percent that of whites in St. Louis, compared to 69 percent in Columbus (U.S. Census Bureau 1990).

These characteristics made St. Louis and Columbus optimal choices for this study, allowing the author to explore variations in girls' experiences in gangs that may emerge in different settings. Indeed, there is evidence that the city context has had some impact on the extent and nature of gangs in each of these cities. Maxson and colleagues (1995) place the onset of gangs in both cities at around 1985, although gangs have waxed and waned in St. Louis for the last century (Decker and Van Winkle 1996). According to police estimates at the time of Maxson and colleagues' (1995) research, Columbus had about 200 gang members, whereas St. Louis was home to roughly 900 gang members.[4] In both cities, gangs appear to be "homegrown" problems (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Huff 1989), although evidence suggests that St. Louis gangs are larger and more criminally involved than are gangs in Columbus (see Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Mayhood and LaLonde 1995). Because law enforcement data tend to underestimate female gang involvement (Curry et al. 1994), it is difficult to assess the variation in female gang participation rates between the two sites.[5] As discussed below, evidence suggests that females constitute a slightly larger percentage of gang membership in St. Louis.

Joining Gangs

Research shows that youths typically associate with gang members for some time—often as much as a year—before joining (Decker and Van Winkle 1996). In the current study, young women typically began hanging out with gang members when they were quite young—around age 12 on average—and joined at an average age of 13. In fact, 69 percent of the girls in the sample joined their gangs before turning 14.

In exploring why young women become involved in gangs, scholars have considered how gender inequalities intersect with class and racial oppression to shape young women's gang experiences. As Campbell (1990: 173) summarizes, "the gang represents for its [female] members an idealized collective solution" for addressing many problems in their lives, including limited educational and occupational opportunities, subordination to men, and childcare responsibilities, as well as the powerlessness of underclass membership they share with males in their communities. This section explores girls' pathways into gangs by presenting the broader contexts and precipitating events that lead young women to spend time with gang members and join gangs.

The study revealed three themes about the factors that contribute to girls' gang involvement. What is notable is that these themes emerged independently in the surveys, as factors distinguishing gang members from nonmembers, and in the indepth interviews, as reasons young women gave for joining gangs. The first theme was girls' neighborhood contexts and their exposure to gangs through neighborhood peer networks. A second theme was the existence of severe family problems, such as violence and drug abuse, which decreased parental supervision, led young women to avoid home, and to seek to meet their social and emotional needs elsewhere. Finally, many young women described the strong influence of gang-involved family members, particularly older siblings in Columbus and siblings and cousins in St. Louis, on their decisions to join gangs.

Exhibit 1 compares gang members and nonmembers' reports on these issues. As noted, there is a significant connection between contemporary youth gangs, urban poverty, and racial segregation. In both cities, the vast majority of girls in the study lived in neighborhoods that were economically worse off and more racially segregated than the city as a whole. These neighborhoods had substantially lower median incomes and higher rates of poverty and unemployment than citywide averages[6] (see Miller 2001 for a

Exhibit 1: Risk Factors for Gang Membership

	Number Answering Yes		Percent Answering Yes	
Risk Factor	**Gang Members (*N* = 48)**	**Non-members (*N* = 46)**	**Gang Members (*N* = 48)**	**Non-members (*N* = 46)**
Neighborhood Exposure to Gangs				
There Is a Lot of Talk About Gangs Around the Neighborhood	38	31	80	67
There Is a Lot of Gang Activity Around the Neighborhood	40	25	83	54
There Are Other Gang Members Living on the Same Street	39	21	81	46*
There Are Rival Gangs Close by	35	26	73	57
Family Problems				
Witness to Physical Violence Between Adults	27	12	56	26*
Abused by Family Member	22	12	46	26*
Regular Alcohol Use in Home	27	17	56	37
Regular Drug Use in Home	28	8	58	17*
Family Member in Prison/Jail	35	31	29	11*
More Than Three of the Above	29	11	60	24*
More Than Four of the Above	21	6	44	13*
Gang-Involved Family Members				
Gang Member(s) in Family	38	25	79	54*
Sibling(s) in Gangs	24	8	50	17*
Multiple Gang Members in Family	29	13	60	28*

* $p < .05$

more detailed description). Although this was the case for gang members and nonmembers alike, important differences emerged in girls' descriptions of their neighborhoods, particularly about their exposure to gangs.

Neighborhood Exposure

In both Columbus and St. Louis, most of the young women described some exposure to gangs in their neighborhoods. Yet, as exhibit 1 highlights, gang members and nonmembers differed in their descriptions of the extent and proximity of gang activity in their neighborhoods. Gang members were significantly more likely than nonmembers to report "a lot" of gang activity in their neighborhoods and to note that gang members lived on their street.[7] In fact, 90 percent of the gang sample responded "yes" to one or both questions. It appears, then, that coupled with other risk factors, living in neighborhoods with gangs in close proximity increases the likelihood that young women will decide to join a gang.[8]

Family Problems

Although neighborhood exposure helps explain why girls join gangs, other precipitating factors also must be considered. The family situation has long been considered crucial for understanding delinquency and gang behavior. Weak supervision and low parental involvement (Esbensen and Deschenes 1998; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Thornberry 1997) and family violence and substance abuse by family members (Fleisher 1998; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Moore 1991) all have been found to contribute to the likelihood that girls will join gangs.[9] Thus, not surprisingly, many of the gang girls in this study described problems in their family lives that led them to spend time away from home, out on the streets, and with gang members.

As exhibit 1 illustrates, gang members were significantly more likely to come from homes with numerous problems than were the young women who were not in gangs. Gang members were significantly more likely to have witnessed physical violence between adults in their homes and to have been abused by adult family members. In addition, gang members were much more likely to report regular drug use in their homes. Most important, gang members were significantly more likely to describe experiencing multiple family problems—with 60 percent describing three or more of the five problems listed in exhibit 1 and 44 percent reporting that four or more of these problems existed in their families. In fact, only three gang members said none of these problems occurred in their families, compared with nine (20 percent) of the nonmembers.

In the indepth interviews, the most common family themes described by young women as contributing to their gang involvement were drug addiction among primary caregivers and being physically or sexually abused by family members.[10] Family problems facilitated girls' gang involvement in various ways, but there was a common thread—young women began spending time away from home as a result of difficulties or dangers there, seeking to get away and to meet their social and emotional needs elsewhere. Several researchers have suggested that "the gang can serve as a surrogate extended family for adolescents who do not see their own families as meeting their needs for belonging, nurturance, and acceptance" (Huff 1993: 6. See also Campbell 1990; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; for a dissenting view, see Decker and Van Winkle 1996). Regardless of whether gangs actually fill these roles in young women's lives, many young women believe that the gang will do so when they become involved.

Influence of Gang-Involved Family Members

Some girls who lack close relationships with their primary caregivers can turn to siblings or extended family members to maintain a sense of belonging and attachment. But if these family members are involved in gangs, it is likely that girls will join gangs as well. Moreover, even when relationships with parents or other adults are strong, having adolescent or young adult gang members in the family often heightens the appeal of gangs (see also Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Moore 1991). As exhibit 1 illustrates, the gang members in this study were significantly more likely than nonmembers to report having family members in gangs. Most important, gang members were much more likely to have siblings in gangs and to have two or more family members involved in gangs.

These relationships differed in the two study sites, with the relationship between a girl's gang membership and that of her family most marked in St. Louis. In Columbus, gang members were not significantly more likely than nongang girls to have a family member in a gang—57 percent of gang members had family members in gangs, versus 48 percent of nonmembers. By comparison, all but one of the gang members surveyed in St. Louis (96 percent) reported having at least one family member involved in gangs. In fact, a greater percentage of nongang girls in St. Louis (62 percent) reported having a family member in a gang than did gang members in Columbus (57 percent).

Gang members in both cities, however, were significantly more likely to report having a sibling involved in gangs than were nonmembers. In all, 52 percent of St. Louis gang members and 48 percent of Columbus gang members had siblings in gangs, compared to 19 and 16 percent of the nonmembers in these cities, respectively. Moreover, in indepth interviews, many girls described the significant influence of older siblings and relatives on their decisions to join their gangs. Often, girls who joined gangs to be with or like their older siblings also experienced the family problems noted earlier (see Miller 2001).

In fact, the themes just reviewed—neighborhood exposure to gangs, family problems, and gang-involved family members—overlapped in most gang members' accounts, further distinguishing them from the nonmembers. Taken individually, a majority of girls fit within each category: 96 percent of gang members described living in neighborhoods with gangs (versus 59 percent of nonmembers). Of these, 69 percent cited their neighborhood and peer networks as factors in their decisions to join a gang. Likewise, 71 percent recognized family problems as contributing factors (26 percent of nonmembers reported similar problems), and 71 percent had siblings or multiple family members in gangs or were influenced in their decision to join by gang-involved family members (compared to one-third of the nonmembers who had gang members in their immediate family or multiple gang members in their extended family). In all, 90 percent of the gang members reported two or more dimensions of these risk factors, and fully 44 percent fit within all three categories. In contrast, only one-third of the nonmembers experienced multiple risk factors for gangs, and only four nonmembers (9 percent, versus 44 percent of gang girls) reported all three dimensions.

Gang Characteristics

Gender

In Columbus and St. Louis, mixed-gender gangs appear to predominate. Of the 48 gang members in the study, 42 (88 percent) described their gangs as including both male and female members.[11] Most girls in mixed-gender gangs were in groups that were primarily male, though St. Louis gangs tended to have more female members than Columbus gangs. In Columbus, 17 girls (85 percent of those in mixed-gender gangs) described their gangs as having more males than females; in St. Louis, 14 of 22 girls (64 percent) did so. In fact, about one-third of the girls in both cities were in gangs with 20 percent or fewer female members. Yet the girls in Columbus were more consistently a minority in their gangs than were the young women in St. Louis. Half of the girls in St. Louis were in gangs in which more than one-third of the membership was female, and more than a third (37 percent) were in gangs in which females comprised at least half of the members. In contrast, only 25 percent of Columbus girls were in gangs in which more than one-third of the members were female, and only three described girls as comprising at least half of the members. These differences are noteworthy because recent evidence suggests that the gender composition of gangs affects the level of gang-member delinquency (Peterson, Miller, and Esbensen 2001).

Size and Racial Composition

Columbus gangs tended to be small: All of the girls described their gangs as having 50 or fewer members, and 85 percent were in gangs with 30 or fewer members. St. Louis gangs were more varied and somewhat larger, as 14 girls (52 percent) described their gangs as having 30 or fewer members, 9 girls (33 percent) reported being in gangs with 35 to 50 members, and 4 girls (15 percent) said that their gangs had more than 50 members. Girls' gangs in Columbus were principally African-American, though some had a small number of white members. Although nearly 25 percent of the gang members interviewed in Columbus were white, all of the girls in St. Louis were African-American (89 percent) or multiracial (11 percent). Their gangs were almost exclusively African-American as well. Only four young women (15 percent) said that there were non-African-Americans in their gangs. The greater racial segregation in St. Louis, combined with the greater strength of neighborhood ties in defining the boundaries of St. Louis gangs (see Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Miller 2001), probably helps explain the less racially diverse character of these groups.

Age

Columbus gangs also were primarily adolescent groups. Of the 21 Columbus gang members surveyed, 10 reported that all their members were 20 or younger, while the rest said their gangs included members who were 21 or older. Yet almost without exception, these groups were primarily teenagers with either one adult who was considered the O.G. ("Original Gangster," or leader) or just a handful of young adults. In contrast, girls in St. Louis were more likely to report having adult members in their gangs. In all, 19 St. Louis girls (70 percent) reported having adults in their gangs, and 6 girls (22 percent) reported members over age 30 in their gangs. Significantly, they characterized these groups as being made up of adolescents and young adults, rather than as primarily adolescent groups.

Regional Differences

These differences probably can be explained by the divergent socioeconomic circumstances of the two cities. Several scholars in gang research have noted that in communities like St. Louis, gang members have a more difficult time leaving the gang because they have limited options in the legitimate economy (Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Hagedorn 1998; Klein 1995; Moore 1991). Thus, a likely explanation for the greater number of older members in St. Louis girls' gangs is that a larger proportion of youths who joined in their early to mid-teens stayed in the gang into young adulthood for economic reasons. In addition, the much stronger neighborhood character of St. Louis gangs was probably a contributing factor: Unless young people left their neighborhood, they likely did not leave the gang, even if their ties to the group weakened with age.

Perhaps because of the greater age range within their gangs, 70 percent of the girls in St. Louis described these groups as having age-based subgroups, though they did not describe role specialization distinguishing between subgroups. Gangs in both cities were territorial, though the nature of their territoriality differed—diffuse in Columbus, but closely tied to specific neighborhoods and blocks in St. Louis (see Miller 2001). In addition, girls' gangs were best characterized in each city as involved in versatile, rather than specialized, delinquency (see below). Based on the dimensions already discussed—size, age range, duration, subgrouping, territoriality, and crime patterns—Klein and Maxson (1996) documented five gang types in cities around the country: traditional, neotraditional, compressed, collective, and specialty gangs.[12] According to this typology, it appears that the gangs in St. Louis are more diverse structurally than the gangs in Columbus.

All of the girls interviewed in Columbus were in gangs that can be characterized as compressed: they were small, without subgroups, and with a narrow age range, a duration of 10 years or less, some territoriality, and criminal versatility. Seven (26 percent) of the interviewees in St. Louis also described gangs that fit this category, and one young woman described her gang in terms that fit Klein and Maxson's designation for a collective gang (no subgroups, may or may not be territorial, versatile crime patterns, 50 or more members, an age range often greater than 10 years, and longer duration than compressed gangs). Most of the gang members interviewed in St. Louis (70 percent), however, described groups that can best be described as neotraditional gangs. These groups resemble potential traditional gangs in the making: Their duration is probably no more than 10 years, (Maxson and Klein 1995: 39) but they are of medium size, with around 50 to 100 members, have age-based cliques, and are territorial.[13] A final difference that emerged in comparing the Columbus and St. Louis gangs was the impact of cultural diffusion on gang characteristics. Girls in Columbus described gangs heavily influenced by Chicago gang style; young women in St. Louis did not. Thus, though Columbus gangs did not appear more organized or criminally sophisticated than those in St. Louis, their leadership structure was more rigid, and they were more likely to have initiations, meetings, and rules (see Miller 2001 for further discussion).

Gangs, Delinquency, and Violence

Gang Membership and Delinquency

Recognition of the strength of the relationship between gang membership and crime participation has generated much gang research in the last decade. Several important studies have shown that gang youths account for a disproportionate amount of delinquency, especially of serious and violent acts (Esbensen et al. 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Fagan 1989, 1990; Huff 1998; Thornberry et al. 1993; Thornberry 1997). Moreover, studies show that participation in delinquency increases dramatically when youths join gangs and declines significantly once they leave their gangs (Huff 1998; Thornberry 1997). These patterns also hold true for female gang members: Young women in gangs have higher rates of delinquency than nonmembers, male or female (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Deschenes and Esbensen 1999; Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Thornberry et al. 1993). Recent evidence also suggests that the gender composition of gangs affects female and male gang members' levels of participation in gang delinquency, with female and male members of majority-male gangs reporting the highest levels of delinquency (Peterson et al. 2001).

Despite gang girls' involvement in delinquency, however, young men are much more extensively involved in the most serious forms of gang crime. For instance, Fagan (1990) reports a bimodal distribution of delinquency for gang girls but not gang boys: Approximately 40 percent of the gang girls in his study were involved in only petty delinquency while a third were involved in multiple Index offending, compared to 15 percent and 56 percent, respectively, for young men. Moreover, evidence suggests that gun use and homicide are much more prevalent among male than female gang members (Decker, Pennell, and Caldwell 1996; Miller and Decker 2001).

In view of this research, it is not surprising that female gang members surveyed in Columbus and St. Louis reported greater involvement in delinquency than did nonmembers. Exhibit 2 compares prevalence rates for gang members and nonmembers for several moderate and serious offenses, as well as frequencies for minor, moderate, and serious offenses, and drug sales.[14] Gang members were significantly more likely than nonmembers to have engaged in nearly every offense measured, with the exceptions of stealing over $100 and hitting someone with the intent of causing injury. Moreover, gang members committed all types of offenses—minor, moderate, and serious, as well as drug sales—more frequently than did girls who were not in gangs. These differences were most striking for serious delinquency and drug sales. On average, gang members had committed 42.21 serious offenses in the past 6 months (averaging about 7 serious crimes per month), compared with only 2.7 for nongang girls (less than 1 every two months).[15] Comparison of gang members and nonmembers' frequency of participation in drug sales reveals even more disparity. On average, gang members sold drugs 53.72 times in the past 6 months, or about twice a week, compared with 4.17 for nonmembers.[16]

Few variations emerged in comparing delinquency prevalence rates among female gang members in both cities, and no variation was evident in comparing rates of serious delinquency or drug sales, but there were striking differences between the two sites in the *frequency* of their involvement in delinquency and drug sales (see exhibit 3). On average, female gang members in Columbus had committed 3.5 times more minor delinquency, twice the amount of moderate delinquency, and just more than 3.5 times more serious delinquency in the 6 months before being interviewed. In contrast, girls in St. Louis were more frequently involved in drug sales. On average, female gang members in St. Louis had sold drugs 11 times per month in the past 6 months, as compared to slightly more than 6 times for girls in Columbus.

Exhibit 2: Prevalence and Frequency of Self-Reported Delinquency

	Number Engaging in Activity		Percent Engaging in Activity	
Prevalence	**Gang Members ($N = 48$)**	**Non-members ($N = 46$)**	**Gang Members ($N = 48$)**	**Non-members ($N = 46$)**
Stole \$50 to \$100	20	8	42	17*
Stole More Than \$100	17	9	35	20
Stole a Motor Vehicle	25	4	52	9
Smoked Marijuana	47	24	98	52*
Sold Marijuana	28	5	58	11*
Sold Crack Cocaine	27	3	56	7*
Carried Concealed Weapon	38	14	79	30*
Committed Robbery	14	4	29	9*
Hit Someone With Intent to Cause Injury	36	28	75	61
Participated in Gang Fight	43	4	90	9*
Attacked Someone With a Weapon or to Cause Serious Injury	33	13	69	28*

	Number of Offenses in Past 6 Months	
Frequency of Participation	**Gang Members**	**Nonmembers**
Minor Delinquency	75.17	31.84*
Moderate Delinquency	30.15	4.28*
Serious Delinquency	42.21	2.70*
Drug Sales	53.72	4.17*

* $p > .05$

Exhibit 3: Frequency of Participation in Delinquency Among Gang Members

	Number of Offenses in Past 6 Months	
	Columbus ($N = 21$)	**St. Louis ($N = 27$)**
Minor Delinquency	133.12	35.76*
Moderate Delinquency	42.10	20.50*
Serious Delinquency	73.71	20.38*
Drug Sales	38.14	66.31*

* $p < .05$

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Recent evidence from a multisite survey indicates that young women in majority-male gangs have higher delinquency rates than their counterparts in gender-balanced groups (Peterson et al. 2001). Thus, the differences in delinquency between Columbus and St. Louis may result from Columbus girls' greater likelihood of membership in gangs with a majority of male members. On the other hand, differences in drug sales between the two sites is likely indicative of the greater economic focus of St. Louis gangs (see Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Miller 2001; Rosenfeld, Bray, and Egley 1999).

The patterns evident in exhibits 2 and 3 do not show another important dimension of gang girls' delinquency—the wide variation in their frequency of offending. As noted above, research on female gang members' delinquency has revealed that some girls are very delinquent, whereas others are involved only in sporadic or minor offending. This pattern was clear among the girls interviewed for this study. Nearly 25 percent of the gang members interviewed had committed no serious delinquent acts in the last 6 months; the same number said they had done so fewer than six times during this period. Yet slightly more than a quarter of them reported more than weekly involvement in serious delinquency—with six girls (13 percent) reporting everyday involvement in these activities. More than half of the gang members interviewed had not sold drugs in the past 6 months, yet 27 percent sold drugs more than once a week, including seven (17 percent) who sold drugs daily. In short, some female gang members are quite delinquent, whereas others seem to temper their routine involvement in criminal offending, particularly serious offending (see also Fagan 1990).

Gender and Gang Crime

Turning to the context of girls' offending within gangs, several key points bear highlighting. First, except for regular drug-selling, most of the gang delinquency young women and their gangs were involved in was not organized or planned. Sometimes youths went out "looking for trouble" or to "start something," but even then, crime was not planned. It was merely something to do, and particular crimes were committed as opportunities presented themselves. As Erica[17], a 17-year-old from Columbus, surmised, "If somebody's bored and they have nothin' to do, then they'll start a fight." At other times, groups of youths came looking to make trouble with other youths, and fights or confrontations ensued. Yet very little crime was premeditated in either Columbus or St. Louis. The second point is that youths' involvement in gang crime is shaped—but not determined—by gender. The kind of activities girls were routinely involved

90

in, the level of their involvement, and the kinds of activities they did not engage in were influenced by gang members' perceptions of appropriate "male" or "female" interactions and behavior. Each of these points is more fully explored below in the context of two facets of gang delinquency: girls' descriptions of conflicts with rival groups and their involvement in the drug trade.

An important element of gang life involves challenging and fighting with rival gangs; it is often at the level of these antagonisms that youths stake out the identity of their gang in opposition to its enemies (see Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Sanders 1993). Opposition to rival gangs is a central theme in the cultural imagery and symbolism that gang youths adopt, and young women often described confrontations with rivals as a consequence of these symbolic displays. Yet these confrontations rarely resulted in serious violence among girls. In fact, gender differences most clearly emerged in girls' discussions of serious violence. Most serious affronts to the gang—and retaliations—were committed by and against young men. When girls were involved, they reported that male gang members left retaliation against rival girls to young women in the gang, except in unusual circumstances (see Miller 1998).

Female-on-female violence within gangs generally involved fists or such weapons as knives, rather than guns. In fact, only one young woman reported having shot a rival, and only three said they had participated in a driveby shooting. Instead, girls said young men were most likely to use guns in their confrontations with rival gang members. Crystal, a 13-year-old from St. Louis, noted, "Girls don't be up there shooting unless they really have to." Likewise, 17-year-old Tonya, also from St. Louis, said, "I ain't never carried no strap [gun] before. I was too nervous. I ain't used no guns." Explaining why girls used fists and knives rather than guns, Pam, an 18-year-old from St. Louis, suggested it was because "We ladies, we not dudes for real." Likewise, Veronica, a 15-year-old from Columbus, said she preferred to fight with her fists, commenting, "I think it's dumb that they have to use weapons and everything." Not surprisingly, a recent analysis of St. Louis homicide data revealed only one gang homicide involving a female perpetrator between 1990 and 1996, compared with 229 gang homicides involving male perpetrators[18] (Miller and Decker 2001). Despite some female gang members' regular involvement in serious gang crime, young women are rarely involved in the most serious and lethal forms of gang violence.

As for drug sales, it was noted above that 52 percent of the female gang members in Columbus described having sold marijuana and 48 percent, crack, whereas around 63 percent of the St. Louis gang members had sold both. In all, 14 girls (6 from Columbus and 8 from St. Louis) were involved in drug sales on at least a weekly basis. As exhibit 3 shows, however, girls in St. Louis had a considerably higher mean frequency of drug sales than girls in Columbus. In fact, five young women in St. Louis (19 percent) sold crack on a daily or near-daily basis, whereas only one young woman in Columbus did. Moreover, young women in St. Louis were more likely to describe status within the gang as deriving from success in the drug trade (see Miller 2001).

Young women in St. Louis who described selling drugs routinely emphasized that it was a key element of their gang activities. Tonya said, "Mostly dudes was . . . selling guns and jacking cars and stuff like that. But everybody selling drugs." In St. Louis, the older girls emphasized the economic benefits of drug sales within their gangs.[19] The two cities' different socioeconomic circumstances and their likely relationship to St. Louis gangs' older and adult membership, could help explain why St. Louis gang members appeared more deeply involved in drug sales than those in Columbus (see also Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Rosenfeld et al. 1999). Most young women in Columbus who talked about girls' involvement in drug sales described it—especially street-level crack selling—as primarily a male endeavor. For example, 17-year-old LaShawna noted, "We don't really let the females do that unless they really wanna and they know how to do it and not to get caught and everything." Asked why girls would be less likely to know how, she explained, "Like they don't get taught . . . 'cause some females in mine don't know how, don't even know how to make dope or whatever."

Gender and Victimization in Gangs

All this focus on the link between gang membership and delinquency has overlooked the equally important relationship between gang membership and crime victimization risk. Though few studies have addressed this issue, it is important. For instance, there is strong evidence that participation in delinquency increases youths' risk of victimization (Lauritsen, Sampson, and Laub 1991). Given ample evidence linking youths' participation in gangs with increases in delinquency, as well as research showing that the primary targets of gang violence are other gang members (Decker 1996; Klein and Maxson 1989; Sanders 1993), it seems self-evident that gang members are more likely than nonmembers to become victims of crime. Moreover, evidence of gender inequality within gangs (Fleisher 1998; Miller 1998, 2001; Moore 1991) and

92

of young men's greater participation in serious gang crime suggests that victimization risk within gangs is likely to be shaped by gender.

There is strong evidence that "adolescent involvement in delinquent lifestyles strongly increases the risk of both personal and property victimization" (Lauritsen et al. 1991: 265). In fact, Lauritsen and her colleagues found that gender decreases in significance as a predictor of victimization risk if one controls for participation in delinquent lifestyles. That is, much of young men's greater victimization risk (with the exception of sexual assault) can be accounted for by their greater involvement in offending behaviors. Given gang members' greater involvement in delinquency, it is not surprising that the gang members interviewed were more likely than nonmembers to report having been victims or witnesses of violent acts.

Gang Membership and Victimization

Exhibit 4 compares gang members' and nonmembers' exposure to violent acts and their victimization experiences. Gang members were significantly more likely than nonmembers to report having seen physical violence involving weapons and to have been sexually assaulted, threatened with a weapon, or stabbed. The figures are startling: Two-thirds of the young women in gangs had witnessed at least one homicide in their lives, and 79 percent had seen someone shot. More than half of the gang members had been sexually assaulted and threatened with a weapon, and a third of them had been stabbed. No significant differences emerged between gang members in Columbus and St. Louis, although a larger percentage of gang members in St. Louis reported witnessing shootings (89 percent, versus 67 percent in Columbus) and killings (74 percent and 52 percent, respectively), and more gang members in St. Louis (41 percent, versus 24 percent in Columbus) had been stabbed.

Gang involvement appears to raise the risk of becoming the victim of the kinds of violence indicative of girls' gang activities.[20] As described above, the vast majority of young women described confrontations with rival gang members that involved fists or knives, but not guns. Thus, it is not surprising that only a handful of girls had been shot, whereas a sizeable minority had been stabbed. In fact, of the four young women who reported having been shot, two of these were accidental shootings that occurred when they were children. These findings are further evidence of the gender-based nature of weapons use and weapons assaults within gangs.

Exhibit 4: Exposure to Violence and Victimization

	Number		Percent	
Exposure to Violence	**Gang Members (*N* = 48)**	**Non-members (*N* = 46)**	**Gang Members (*N* = 48)**	**Non-members (*N* = 46)**
Seen Attack	41	41	85	89
Seen Sexual Assault	7	5	15	11
Seen Stabbing	27	10	56	22*
Seen Guns Shot	46	31	96	67*
Seen Someone Shot	38	19	79	41*
Seen Driveby Shooting	29	12	60	26*
Seen Someone Killed	31	12	65	26*
Victimization				
Attacked	20	12	42	26
Sexually Assaulted	25	10	52	22*
Threatened With a Weapon	27	9	56	20*
Stabbed	16	1	33	2*
Shot	4	1	8	2*

* $p < .05$

Twenty-five gang members (52 percent) reported having been sexually assaulted, for a total of 35 assaults. Most of the sexual victimization young women reported occurred in the context of the family. In all, 23 of the 35 incidents described (66 percent) were committed by family members, or by men whom young women were exposed to through their families. Gang membership did not seem to increase girls' risk of being sexually assaulted, but it increased their risk of becoming the victim of other forms of violent crime. That is, they were at tremendous risk for sexual assault in other arenas of their lives and perhaps saw the gang as a refuge from the sexual aggressors around them. This is not to suggest, however, that sexual assaults within gangs did not occur or that other forms of sexual exploitation were not present (see Fleisher 1998; Miller 1998, 2001; Miller and Brunson 2000). In fact, as will be discussed, the less girls were involved in gang crime, the more vulnerable they appeared to be to sexual exploitation and other mistreatment within the gang.

Because intergang rivalries and delinquency are important elements of gang activities, some level of victimization risk is an expected part of gang life.

Members recognized that they may be the targets of rival gang members and were expected to "be down" for their gang at those times, even when it meant being physically hurt. Young women's descriptions of the qualities they valued in gang members revealed the extent to which the ability to handle violence was deemed an important part of successful gang involvement. Members were supposed to be tough and able to fight and to engage in criminal activities, while remaining loyal to the gang and willing to put themselves at risk for it.

A Sense of Empowerment

Despite the violence that was a structured and expected part of gang membership, many young women described their gang involvement as providing a sense of empowerment. Young women in both cities focused on the camaraderie of having a group of friends, who, as Lisa, a 13-year-old from Columbus, said, "got my back," and also the sense of self that developed from earning a reputation for being tough. Erica explained, "It's like you put that intimidation in somebody . . . they don't bother you." Perhaps because of their greater involvement in the drug trade, some St. Louis gang members also mentioned the empowerment that came from economic self-sufficiency and independence. An important element of the empowerment that gangs provided was that of having a group of people who could offer protection, backup, and retaliation—necessities for success in the drug trade and survival on the streets.

Many young women in both cities felt a gender-based sense of protection from being a member of a predominantly male group. Gangs operate within larger social milieus characterized by gender inequality and sexual exploitation, as evidenced by the widespread sexual abuse young women had experienced outside of their gangs. In part, they saw the gang as a refuge from these dangers. Being in a gang with young men offered at least the semblance of protection from, and retaliation against, predatory men in the larger social environment. Heather, a 15-year-old from Columbus, noted, "You feel more secure when, you know, a guy's around protectin' you." She explained that as a gang member, "You get protected by guys . . . not as many people mess with you." Likewise, Rhonda, a 15-year-old from St. Louis, said that people didn't often "mess with" her, "Cause they know if they try to take advantage of the girls [in the gang], then it gonna be a problem."

Gender as a Shield From Risk

Moreover, in gangs, young women could use their gender to shield and control their exposure to gang violence, at least to some extent. Because status hierarchies in most of their gangs were male-dominated, young women actually seemed to have greater flexibility in their gang activities than did young men (see Miller 1998). Female gang members were not expected by their male and female peers to be heavily involved in such criminal activities as gun use, drug sales, and other serious crimes. As discussed, most of the gang members surveyed in both cities were not routinely involved in serious crime and drug sales, and few of them used guns. Compared with the experience of more seriously delinquent gang youths, these girls' limited involvement in such activities decreased their risk of becoming a victim of gang-related crime, because they could avoid activities likely to place them in danger. Moreover, girls' routine confrontations were more likely to be female-on-female, rather than male-on-female, which further reduced their risk of serious victimization. As Vashelle, a 14-year-old from St. Louis, explained, "Most girls, they ain't gonna do nothing for real but try to stab you, cut you, or something like that. As far as coming by shooting and stuff like a dude would do, no." Getting stabbed, while serious, is much less likely to be lethal than getting shot.

Yet despite the protections offered by the gang and their attempts to avoid risky behaviors, the young women surveyed admitted that gang membership posed personal dangers. They were concerned not only about the risk of running into rival gang members but also about the ever-present threat of violence in their dangerous neighborhoods. As Rhonda explained, "I worry about [violence] all the time and it's like, violence is gonna be here until the day everybody kill one another, until God comes down from heaven and takes over." Leslie, a 16-year-old from Columbus, said that even though she tried to avoid danger by not "doin' all that they was doin'," she recognized that as a gang member, "You can get shot when you're sittin' on the porch. I mean, you can get hurt anywhere you are, you can still get hurt. It doesn't matter where you are or what you're doin', you can get hurt." Crystal said, "[When] you got one gang member that got a problem with another person, they'll shoot at the whole set or whatever. . . . A whole bunch of them will start shooting at people that got nothing to do with it."

As these descriptions suggest, young women did not fear being the target of rival gang members' gunshots; rather, they recognized the danger of being shot as a result of being in a group context where someone opened fire. These descriptions echo homicide reports from St. Louis: Young women made up only 8 percent of gang homicide victims from 1990 to 1996, and the vast majority of them were not the intended target, but were shot when rival gangs opened fire into a group (see Miller and Decker 2001).

Victimization Within Gangs

Much of the violence discussed thus far has been tied to intergang rivalries and conflict. It is important to note, however, that some young women in gangs face mistreatment and abuse at the hands of fellow gang members. Many girls did not participate in serious gang crime, not just because they chose to avoid it but also because they were excluded by young men (see also Bowker et al. 1980). Although girls' exclusion from some gang crime was framed as protective (and thus likely reduced their victimization by rival gangs), it also served to perpetuate the devaluation of female members as less significant to the gang—as weak and not as tough, or not as ready to protect the gang as are male members. Describing the masculine basis of status hierarchies within her gang, Sheila, a 17-year-old from St. Louis, noted, "The dudes think they run it all."

In terms of gender-specific victimization risk within the gang, the devaluation of young women meant several things. It could lead to mistreatment and victimization of some girls by other gang members, especially when they did not have specific male protection in the gang (e.g., a brother or boyfriend) or were not able to stand up for themselves to male members. This was exacerbated by activities that led young women to be viewed as sexually available. The most obvious example was the existence of "sexing in"—having sexual relations with multiple male members of the gang—as an initiation ritual. Other gang members, both male and female, viewed young women initiated in this way as promiscuous and sexually available and were more likely to mistreat them (see Miller 1998, 2001). This stigma could extend to female members in general, creating a sexual devaluation that all the girls had to contend with.

Nonetheless, girls' experiences within gangs varied greatly. Some young women were able to carve out a niche for themselves that put them, if not equal in standing to young men, at least on par in terms of their treatment. Other young women were severely mistreated, and there was a range of experiences in between. Ironically, the young women most respected within the gang were more likely to face gang-related victimization by rivals; those defined as "weak," because they did not participate in gang-related fighting and delinquency, were more likely to be abused by their gang peers.

Implications

This chapter has addressed several issues about young women's involvement in gangs—the extent of that involvement, why they become involved, and what their experiences in gangs are like, including their participation in delinquency and exposure to violence. As has been discussed, young women join gangs in response to a myriad of problems in their lives. Yet gang involvement tends to exacerbate, rather than improve, their problems. It increases the likelihood that young women will engage in delinquency and exposes them to risks of victimization, both by rival gangs and by fellow gang members. Though young women are not as involved as young men in the most serious forms of gang violence, and gangs are less likely to be life-threatening for females than for males, gang involvement often narrows young women's life options even further (see Moore 1991).

Although this research was not explicitly focused on policy, it may yield several suggestions for policy and practice. With regard to efforts to prevent gang involvement, the research highlights several notable issues. The girls in this study began associating with gang members at age 12 on average, and 69 percent of them joined gangs before turning 14. Thus, prevention must begin early in a girl's life. In addition, a series of risk factors appear to increase the likelihood that gangs will become an alluring option. These include living in neighborhoods where gangs are close by; having multiple family problems, including violence and drug abuse; and having siblings or multiple family members in gangs. Most significant, it appears that the convergence of such risk factors heightens girls' risks for gang involvement: Fully 90 percent of the gang members in this study reported two of these three risk factors. Prevention should focus on girls exposed to these problems and should begin early.

This project also has implications for gang intervention with young women. Most notable is the need to recognize variations in young women's experiences and activities within and across gangs. The research presented here suggests that although gender-specific interventions may be useful in some instances (particularly in addressing sexual assault and abuse), some features of gang programming for young men are likely to be just as important for girls. For example, although girls are rarely as involved as boys in serious violence, group processes, conflicts, and rivalries provoke girls' participation in confrontations with rival gang members just as they do for young men. Thus, interventions for girls need to take such issues into account (see Klein 1995). Younger girls, in particular, appear to respond to gang group processes, whereas older girls—like older male gang members—view the gang as providing support for such income-generating activities as drug sales. This suggests that such intervention strategies as providing job training and employment opportunities are just as important for female gang members as for their male counterparts.

Intervention strategies should also be tailored to meet the diverse needs of female gang members. Specific knowledge about girls' gangs—for instance, their participation in economic versus symbolic crimes—can suggest effective approaches. In addition, knowledge about the gender composition of girls' gangs is likely to provide information about the level of young women's involvement in delinquency. As noted, young women in gangs having a majority of male members appear to be more deeply immersed in criminal endeavors than are young women in gender-balanced or all-female groups (see Peterson et al. 2001). In particular, the level and nature of young women's participation in gang crime may be an indicator of the particular types of victimization risks these young women face: Girls who are heavily involved in street crime are at heightened risk for physical violence, such as assaults and stabbings; those who are not are at greater risk for ongoing physical and sexual mistreatment by male gang members (see also Miller and Brunson 2000). Most important is the need to recognize that young women in gangs are not a monolithic group and should not be treated as if they were.

Unfortunately, responses to gangs and gang members are often primarily punitive and disregard the social, economic, and personal contexts that lead to gang participation. This punitiveness means that gang members are not seen as needing assistance and protection, which—coupled with the problems they face in their daily lives—further harms these youths (see Fleisher 1998; Moore and Hagedorn 1996). Moreover, few programs and policies have been targeted to the needs of female gang members (see Curry, 1999b; Williams, Cohen, and Curry, this volume). Given the findings detailed above, the best strategy for addressing young women's gang involvement should include policies that take into account the social, economic, and personal contexts that influence gang participation, gang crime, and young women's victimization within these groups. Initiatives that consider the best interest of youths are needed to respond rationally to gangs and young women's involvement in them.

Notes

1. For instance, Curry, Ball, and Fox (1994) found that some law enforcement policies officially exclude females from their counts of gang members. Controlling for data from these cities, they still found that females were only 5.7 percent of the gang members known to law enforcement agencies. Part of the reason for this underestimation may be the greater likelihood of male gang members to be involved in serious gang crimes and the average age differences between male and female gang members (see Curry 1999a).

2. An extensive body of evidence suggests that self-nomination is a robust measure of gang membership (see Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen et al. 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Fagan 1990; Thornberry et al. 1993; Winfree et al. 1992). It is not foolproof, however. One potential problem is that "wannabes" may claim gang membership when they are not actually involved. To contend with this potential problem, the veracity of youths' accounts and their depth of knowledge was checked by comparing them to other youths' descriptions of their gangs and other available information. No significant inconsistencies were found. An additional benefit of using self-nomination was that it provided a means of applying limited definitional criteria to capture what may be a varied phenomenon (see Horowitz 1990).

3. In both cities, the population is primarily African-American and white—in Columbus, the two groups together comprise 95.8 percent of the population; in St. Louis, 98.4 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 1990).

4. In response to a survey by the National Youth Gang Center, the St. Louis Police Department recently described the city as having 75 active gangs and 1,300 gang members. In contrast, the Columbus Police Department recently adopted an official policy that the city has no recognized youth gangs (Curry 1998). (For a discussion of the politics of gang definitions and law enforcement response to gangs, see Huff 1990.)

5. In fact, the St. Louis police department's recent response to the National Youth Gang Center estimates that St. Louis gangs are 100 percent male (Curry 1998).

6. Findings from the Rochester Youth Development Study (RYDS) also suggest that growing up in disorganized, violent neighborhoods is a risk

100

factor for gang involvement for young women (Thornberry 1997). Yet researchers have found no differences between gang and nongang youths in these communities in perceived limited opportunities (Esbensen et al. 1993), and family poverty was not a significant predictor of gang membership for young women in the RYDS study.

7. Significance levels are based on chi-square tests. Note that although statistics are used to make comparisons throughout the chapter, the sample is purposive and thus violates key assumptions about random or representative sampling. Although, technically, statistical methods are inappropriate for this sample, the methods are used here not in an attempt to generalize to a larger population but to highlight the strength of the patterns uncovered.

8. No young woman in this study reported having been forced to join a gang.

9. Although qualitative studies are most likely to find family problems at the heart of girls' gang involvement, several studies based on surveys of juvenile populations note school-based problems (see Thornberry 1997 for an overview). Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) found that low expectations for completing school were a significant predictor of gang membership for young women. Likewise, Bowker and Klein (1983) report that female gang members are less likely than nonmembers to intend to finish high school or go to college. More recently, Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) report that school commitment and expectations are associated with gang involvement for girls. In the current study, differences between gang members and nonmembers did not emerge in school measures, nor did gang members describe school contexts as contributing to their decisions to join. This may be a result of difference across sites, or the result of sampling or methodological differences. (See Esbensen and Winfree 1998 for a discussion of sampling and methodology.)

10. While the RYDS study did not find family violence a significant risk factor for female gang involvement (Thornberry 1997), a growing body of literature supports the link between childhood maltreatment and youths' subsequent involvement in delinquency. (See Smith and Thornberry 1995; Widom 1989.)

11. One member of an all-girl gang in Columbus and two in St. Louis were interviewed, in addition to three St. Louis girls who were members of a

female set affiliated with a neighborhood mixed-gender gang. Though there have been recent critiques of Walter Miller's (1975) tripartite classification of female gang involvement as occurring in mixed-gender gangs, independent female gangs, and auxiliary subgroups of male gangs (see Hagedorn and Devitt 1999; Peterson et al. 2001; Nurge 1998), for the purpose of this paper, this classification is maintained.

12. Traditional gangs are found in cities with longer histories of gangs; they have a history spanning 20 years or more, include more than 100 members, have a wide age range (20 to 30 years), subgroupings, and are territorial with versatile crime patterns. Neotraditional gangs also have subgroupings, are territorial, and have versatile crime patterns, but they are somewhat smaller (50 to 100 members) and have a narrower age range and a shorter duration. Compressed and collective gangs have no subgroups, may or may not be territorial, and have versatile crime patterns. While compressed gangs are small (fewer than 50 members), with a narrow age range (typically less than 10 years) and short duration, collective gangs are larger (50 or more members), have a wider age range (typically more than 10 years), and their duration can be somewhat longer. Finally, specialty gangs, which were not found in either city, specialize in particular types of crimes (such as drug distribution) and are less social; they typically do not have subgroups, are quite territorial, and are small, with a narrow age range and short duration. (See Klein and Maxson 1996; Maxson and Klein 1995.)

13. Yet there is evidence that gang involvement has declined in St. Louis over the last few years, and police suggest a splintering of gangs has occurred (Decker 1998). This is also reflected in the decline in gang homicide and the decline in the percentage of gang homicides that are gang motivated (see Rosenfeld, Bray, and Egley 1999). Consequently, the likelihood that these groups will emerge as traditional gangs does not appear to be great.

14. Minor delinquency includes the following: running away, skipping class, lying about one's age, being loud or rowdy in public, avoiding paying for things, and stealing $5 or less. Six items were classified as moderate delinquency: being drunk in public, damaging or destroying property, stealing items valued between $5 and $50, using a car without permission, throwing objects like bottles or rocks at people, and hitting someone with the intent to cause injury. Finally, serious delinquency included carrying a concealed weapon, stealing items valued at more than $50, stealing a car,

attacking someone with a weapon or with the intent to cause serious injury, participating in a gang fight, and committing a robbery. (See Bjerregaard and Smith 1992.)

15. Yet it is important to note that female gang members' most frequent serious offense was carrying concealed weapons. When this item was removed from the count, gang girls committed an average of 13.78 serious crimes in the last 6 months—slightly more than 2 per month.

16. Seven gang members said that they sold drugs every day. Each day was counted as an incident of drug sales, rather than each sale, making the mean frequency reported an underestimation of the actual number of times they sold drugs. Moreover, one nonmember reported selling marijuana every day. If these sales (*n* = 180) were removed from the calculation of nonmembers' mean frequency of participation in drug sales, all nonmembers reported selling drugs 12 times in the last 6 months (for a mean of .26).

17. All of the names of the gang members quoted in this chapter are fictitious.

18. The woman in question was not a gang member, but because her victim was a gang member, the homicide was classified as gang related. (See Miller and Decker 2001.)

19. All of the young women interviewed described drug sales for individual profit, rather than for their gangs.

20. In an analysis not shown here, bivariate correlations were run between the frequency of victimization and exposure to violence (measured as never, once, a few times, many times) and the frequency of serious offending and crack sales (measured as the number of times young women reported having committed these offenses in the past 6 months). Frequent involvement in serious delinquency was significantly correlated with several types of victimization and exposure to violence, including being threatened with a weapon and stabbed and witnessing guns shot, stabbings, shootings, driveby shootings, and homicides. Frequent involvement in crack sales was correlated with having been stabbed, seen guns fired, and witnessed driveby shootings. These findings further suggest that girls' patterns of offending shape their exposure to violence. (See Miller 2001.)

References

Bjerregaard, Beth, and Carolyn Smith. 1993. "Gender Differences in Gang Participation, Delinquency, and Substance Use." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 9(4): 329–355.

Bowker, Lee H., Helen Shimota Gross, and Malcolm W. Klein. 1980. "Female Participation in Delinquent Gang Activities." *Adolescence* 15 (59): 509–519.

Bowker, Lee H., and Malcolm W. Klein. 1983. "The Etiology of Female Juvenile Delinquency and Gang Membership: A Test of Psychological and Social Structural Explanations." *Adolescence* 18(72): 739–751.

Campbell, Anne. 1990. "Female Participation in Gangs." In *Gangs in America,* ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 163–182.

Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission. 1995. *State of Human Services Report—1995.* Columbus, OH: Columbus Metropolitan Human Services Commission.

Community Development Agency. 1993. *Neighborhood Demographic Profiles: 1990.* St. Louis: City of St. Louis.

Curry, G. David. 1998. Personal correspondence, August 13.

———. 1999a. "Race, Ethnicity, and Gender Issues in Gangs: Reconciling Police Data." In *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Issues and Making POP Work,* vol. 2, ed. Corina Solé Brito and Tracy Allan, Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum: 63–89.

———. 1999b. "Responding to Female Gang Involvement." In *Female Gangs in America,* ed. Meda Chesney-Lind and John Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press: 277–294.

Curry, G. David, Richard A. Ball, and Robert J. Fox. 1994. *Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping.* Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, June, NCJ 148345.

Decker, Scott H. 1996. "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence." *Justice Quarterly* 13(2): 243–264.

———. 1998. Personal correspondence. September 6.

Decker, Scott H., Susan Pennell, and Amy Caldwell. 1996. *Arrestees and Guns: Monitoring the Illegal Firearms Market.* Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, NCJ 163497.

Decker, Scott H., and Barrik Van Winkle. 1996. *Life in the Gang.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Deschenes, Elizabeth Piper, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 1999. "Violence Among Girls: Does Gang Membership Make a Difference?" In *Female Gangs in America*, ed. Meda Chesney-Lind and John Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press: 277–294.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and Elizabeth Piper Deschenes. 1998. "A Multi-Site Examination of Gang Membership: Does Gender Matter?" *Criminology* 36: 799–828.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and David Huizinga. 1993. "Gangs, Drugs, and Delinquency in a Survey of Urban Youth." *Criminology* 31(4): 565–589.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, David Huizinga, and Anne W. Weiher. 1993. "Gang and Non-Gang Youth: Differences in Explanatory Factors." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 9(2): 94–116.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and L. Thomas Winfree. 1998. "Race and Gender Differences Between Gang and Non-Gang Youth: Results from a Multi-Site Survey." *Justice Quarterly* 15: 505–525.

Fagan, Jeffrey. 1989. "The Social Organization of Drug Use and Drug Dealing Among Urban Gangs." *Criminology* 27 (4): 633–667.

———. 1990. "Social Processes of Delinquency and Drug Use Among Urban Gangs." In *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 183–219.

Fleisher, Mark S. 1998. *Dead End Kids: Gang Girls and the Boys They Know.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Glassner, Barry, and Cheryl Carpenter. 1985. *The Feasibility of an Ethnographic Study of Property Offenders.* Final Report submitted to the National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, NCJ 107044.

Glassner, Barry, and Julia Loughlin. 1987. *Drugs in Adolescent Worlds: Burnouts to Straights.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Hagedorn, John M. 1991. "Gangs, Neighborhoods, and Public Policy." *Social Problems* 38: 529–542.

———. 1998. *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*, 2nd ed. Chicago: Lake View Press.

Hagedorn, John M., and Mary Devitt. 1999. "Fighting Female: The Social Construction of Female Gangs." In *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs and Gender,* ed. Meda Chesney-Lind and John Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press: 256–276.

Horowitz, Ruth. 1990. "Sociological Perspectives on Gangs: Conflicting Definitions and Concepts." In *Gangs in America,* ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 37–54.

Huff, C. Ronald. 1989. "Youth Gangs and Public Policy." *Crime and Delinquency.* 35(4): 524–537.

———. 1990. "Denial, Overreaction, and Misidentification: A Postscript on Public Policy." In *Gangs in America,* ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 310–317.

———. 1993. "Gangs in the United States." In *The Gang Intervention Handbook,* ed. Arnold P. Goldstein and C. Ronald Huff. Champaign, IL: Research Press: 3–20.

———. 1998. *Comparing the Criminal Behavior of Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youths.* Research in Brief. October. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 172852.

Joe, Karen A., and Meda Chesney-Lind. 1995. "'Just Every Mother's Angel': An Analysis of Gender and Ethnic Variations in Youth Gang Membership." *Gender and Society* 9(4): 408–430.

Klein, Malcolm W. 1971. *Street Gangs and Street Workers.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

———. 1995. *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Klein, Malcolm W., and Cheryl L. Maxson. 1989. "Street Gang Violence." In *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals,* ed. Neil Weiner and Marvin Wolfgang. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 198–231.

———. 1996. "Gang Structures, Crime Patterns, and Police Responses." Final Report to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, NCJ 188511.

Lauritsen, Janet L., Robert J. Sampson, and John H. Laub. 1991. "The Link Between Offending and Victimization Among Adolescents." *Criminology* 29(2): 265–292.

Maxson, Cheryl L., and Malcolm W. Klein. 1995. "Investigating Gang Structures." *Journal of Gang Research* 3(1): 33–40.

Maxson, Cheryl L., Kristi Woods, and Malcolm W. Klein. 1995. "Street Gang Migration in the United States." Final Report to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC: NCJ 172235.

Mayhood, Kevin, and Brent LaLonde. 1995. "A Show of Colors: A Local Look." *The Columbus Dispatch,* September 3.

Messerschmidt, James W. 1995. "From Patriarchy to Gender: Feminist Theory, Criminology and the Challenge of Diversity." In *International Feminist Perspectives in Criminology: Engendering a Discipline,* ed. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Frances Heidensohn. Philadelphia: Open University Press: 167–188.

Miller, Jody. 1998. "Gender and Victimization Risk Among Young Women in Gangs." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 35(4): 429–453.

———. 2001. *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender.* New York Oxford University Press.

Miller, Jody, and Rod K. Brunson. 2000. "Gender Dynamics in Youth Gangs: A Comparison of Male and Female Accounts." *Justice Quarterly* 17(3): 801–830.

Miller, Jody, and Scott H. Decker. 2001. "Young Women and Gang Violence: An Examination of Gender, Street Offending and Violent Victimization in Gangs." *Justice Quarterly* 18(1): 115–140.

Miller, Jody, and Barry Glassner. 1997. "The 'Inside' and the 'Outside': Finding Realities in Interviews." In *Qualitative Research* ed. David Silverman. London: Sage Publications: 99–112.

Miller, Walter. 1975. *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Groups as a Crime Problem in Major American Cities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, NCJ 137446.

Moore, Joan. 1991. *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Moore, Joan, and Raquel Pinderhughes. 1993. *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Nurge, Dana. 1998. "Female Gangs and Cliques in Boston: What's the Difference?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Washington, DC.

Peterson, Dana, Jody Miller, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 2001. "The Impact of Sex Composition on Gangs and Gang Member Delinquency." *Criminology* 39(2): 411–439.

Rosenfeld, Richard, Timothy Bray, and Arlen Egley. 1999. "Facilitating Violence: A Comparison of Gang-Motivated, Gang-Affiliated, and Non-Gang Youth Homicides." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 15(4): 495–516.

Rusk, David. 1995. *Cities Without Suburbs.* 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.

Sanders, William. 1993. *Drive-Bys and Gang Bangs: Gangs and Grounded Culture.* Chicago: Aldine.

Sampson, Robert J., and William Julius Wilson. 1995. "Toward a Theory of Race, Crime and Urban Inequality." In *Crime and Inequality,* ed. John Hagan and Ruth D. Peterson. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 37–54.

Short, James F., and Fred L. Strodtbeck. 1965. *Group Process and Gang Delinquency.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Carolyn, and Terence P. Thornberry. 1995. "The Relationship Between Childhood Maltreatment and Adolescent Involvement in Delinquency." *Criminology* 33(4): 451–479.

Thornberry, Terence P. 1997. "Membership in Youth Gangs and Involvement in Serious and Violent Offending." In ***Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions,*** ed. Rolf Loeber and David P. Farrington. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications: 147–166.

———. 1999. Personal correspondence, April 2.

Thornberry, Terence P., Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Deborah Chard-Wierschem. 1993. "The Role of Juvenile Gangs in Facilitating Delinquent Behavior." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30(1): 75–85.

U.S. Census Bureau. 1990. *1990 Decennial Census of Population and Housing Characteristics.* Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Widom, Cathy Spatz. 1989. "Child Abuse, Neglect, and Violent Criminal Behavior." *Criminology* 27(2): 251–271.

Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Winfree, L. Thomas, Jr., Kathy Fuller, Teresa Vigil, and G. Larry Mays. 1992. "The Definition and Measurement of 'Gang Status': Policy Implications for Juvenile Justice." *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 43(1): 29–37.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chapter 4

Youth Gang Homicides in the United States in the 1990s

Cheryl L. Maxson, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology, Law, and Society
University of California–Irvine

G. David Curry, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and
Criminal Justice, Department of Sociology
University of Missouri–St. Louis

James C. Howell, Ph.D.
Adjunct Researcher,
National Youth Gang Center

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by cooperative agreement 95–JD–MU–K001 between the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. The datasets used for this report were acquired from IIR's National Youth Gang Center (NYGC), funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and from studies conducted by the first and second authors that were supported by the National Institute of Justice. Initial work on the chapter was performed under NYGC auspices. The authors are grateful for the technical assistance of Arlen Egley, NYGC, and suggestions made on an earlier version of the chapter by Scott H. Decker, University of Missouri–St. Louis, and an anonymous reviewer. A summary of this study was published as an OJJDP Fact Sheet (Curry, G. David, Cheryl L. Maxson, and James C. Howell, *Youth Gang Homicides in the 1990's*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, March 2001, FS 200103.)

Abstract

In this study of youth gang homicides in U.S. cities in the 1990s, the authors found that although the numbers fell, they varied from city to city and in the early and later parts of the decade. From 1991 to 1996, when 408 cities were studied, the total number of gang homicides declined nearly 15 percent from 1,748 to 1,492. Of the 237 cities that reported having both a gang problem and a gang homicide in all 3 years of the period 1996 to 1998, the total number of gang homicides fell 18 percent from 1,293 to 1,061. Although these decreases are heartening and relatively few cities reported large numbers of gang homicides, they conceal the fact that one city—Los Angeles—accounted for 30 percent of the decrease in the early part of the decade. Along with Chicago, Los Angeles stands out as having the highest gang homicide rate. Moreover, the percentage of cities reporting an increase in that period (29 percent) was about the same as the percentage reporting a decrease (32 percent); 39 percent reported no change. The second part of the decade brought news that was more encouraging, as more cities reported a decrease (49 percent) than an increase (36 percent).

Gangs have become a focus for lawmakers, political candidates, and police chiefs, as well as for researchers and Federal agencies, because gang members commit a lot of crime, particularly as compared with other young people. Findings from recent long-term studies of youths in several U.S. cities reveal that those identifying themselves as gang members commit the vast majority of serious violent offenses reported for their age group (Thornberry 1998). For at least the past two decades, law enforcement has responded to gang violence with a variety of suppression efforts, many of which are described in this volume. These efforts are based primarily in individual jurisdictions, and thus are most appropriately framed in the historical, political, and sociodemographic context of those communities.

This chapter focuses on national patterns of gang homicide, specifically on whether this most serious form of gang violence increased or decreased during the 1990s. This analysis is limited to homicide because homicide is the only form of gang crime for which there are national data. Moreover, homicide is the gang crime most likely to raise community concern, elicit political reaction, and trigger suppressive responses by law enforcement. Thus, in a volume dedicated to "responding to gangs," it is useful to include a broad, empirically based depiction of the changes in national gang homicide levels over the past decade of gang research and program evaluation. This information would also be important for policy purposes, such as the allocation of Federal resources. The identification of factors associated with changes in gang homicide is essential to understanding gang violence and to planning policies and strategies that address it.

Available data on national gang homicide trends have several limitations; local area analyses provide far richer prospects to guide policy and interventions. Yet local and regional policymakers may benefit from placing gang violence trends within the broader context of the national patterns reported here. Federal policymakers also should find the conclusions of this study useful.

A secondary objective of this study was to integrate gang homicide data from three studies to build a reliable national database that can be used to examine future gang homicide trends. The limitations of the available data restrict the scope of the analysis, but if expanded support for gang homicide reporting were forthcoming, it could substantially increase the utility of such analyses.

This chapter reports the results of a study of youth gang[1] homicides in the 1990s. The study comprises three components: analysis of the trend in gang homicides from the early to mid-1990s; analysis of the pattern of gang homicides in the late 1990s; and examination of selected city-level variables (population size, number of gangs, and number of gang members) associated with gang homicides.

Three gang databases were used to examine gang homicides reported in selected cities in 1991 and again in the mid-1990s. For the mid- to late 1990s comparison, National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) data on 99 percent of all cities with a population of more than 25,000 were analyzed. The NYGS database was also used to examine several correlates of gang homicides. The study set out to determine whether gang homicides increased during the decade and to examine factors related to different homicide trends.

Background

Two national databases are commonly used by researchers to examine overall homicide trends: mortality data from *Vital Statistics of the United States* (compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics) and the *Supplementary Homicide Reports* (SHR) in the Uniform Crime Reports compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Unfortunately, gang homicide data are not reported in *Vital Statistics of the United States,* and the data contained in the *Supplementary Homicide Reports* are of questionable utility for gang research (see Maxson 1998a for a detailed discussion; see also Curry, Ball, and Decker 1995, 1996a, 1996b; Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994; and Miller 1992). Thus, surveys of law enforcement agencies are used to obtain data on gang homicides that are maintained in law enforcement records. The information in these records is limited to what is known and documented by law enforcement investigators. Researchers attempting to extract information from police investigation files quickly confront these limitations. As one researcher noted, "[I]nformation on some coded items may be missing, conflicting, or otherwise confusing so as to challenge the skills of the most skilled data collectors" (Maxson 1992: 199). Surveys of law enforcement that span multiple cities, such as the studies included in this analysis, generally are based on reports of the number of gang homicides during a specified period, obtained from a jurisdiction's designated gang expert or data analyst. Such surveys do not capture the incident-level descriptors (e.g., characteristics of the incident circumstances, settings, participants) obtained by researchers that extract data elements directly from homicide investigation files.

A growing body of empirically based literature describes the gang aspects of homicide in a number of U.S. cities. Several studies of Los Angeles (by Maxson, Klein, and colleagues), Chicago (by C. Block, R. Block, and colleagues) and St. Louis (by Rosenfeld, Decker, and colleagues) have tracked the characteristics of gang homicides over several decades (see Howell 1999 and Maxson 1998a for a review of these studies). Other gang homicide studies have been conducted in Boston (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997; Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996), Chicago (Curry and Spergel 1988), Houston (Brewer, Damphousse, and Adkinson 1998), Los Angeles (Hutson, Anglin, and Pratts 1994; Hutson et al. 1995, 1999), Minneapolis (Kennedy and Braga 1998), and Pittsburgh (Cohen and Tita 1998). Comparative studies of gang homicide have been conducted in St. Louis and Chicago (Cohen et al. 1998), and in Philadelphia, Phoenix, and St. Louis (Zahn and Jamieson 1997).

Previous Multicity Gang Homicide Surveys

The first multicity gang homicide data were reported by Miller (1975, 1992) in conjunction with his national survey of cities with gang problems. He tabulated gang-related killings from 1967 to 1980 for 9 of the Nation's largest cities and 50 other cities for which statistics were available and made various comparisons among the major cities with gang problems (Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Boston, Miami, Detroit, San Antonio, and New York). Arrest data Miller compiled show that gang killings were concentrated in large cities. Reported gang killings in the 59 cities increased from 181 in 1967 to 633 in 1980, an increase of 250 percent. The total number of gang homicides over the 14-year period was 3,509—an average of 250 killings per year. The leading gang homicide cities during the 14-year period of Miller's study, in average number of killings per year, were Los Angeles (75), Chicago (55), and Philadelphia (25). Homicide rates for youths aged 10 to 19 in these cities were 31.9 per 100,000 in Los Angeles, 18.5 in Chicago, and 14.7 in Philadelphia.

Two surveys elicited gang homicide data for 1991 from law enforcement agencies. In the one conducted by Curry and his colleagues (Curry et al. 1992; Curry, Ball, and Decker 1995) among the 72 largest U.S. cities, 41 agencies reported a total of 964 gang homicides, 53 percent of which were committed in Chicago and Los Angeles. In the Maxson-Klein survey (Klein

1995; Maxson 1998b; Maxson, Woods, and Klein 1995), police departments in 792 cities were asked about gang homicides during 1991. A total of 299 cities (40 percent of those surveyed) reported 2,166 gang-related homicides in that year, 40 percent of which were committed in just 12 cities and 23 percent of which (500 homicides) were committed in Los Angeles and Chicago alone (Klein 1995; Maxson 1998a).

Measuring Gang Homicides

Counts of gang homicides are vulnerable to challenges about reliability and validity. Curry and his colleagues note that "the major sources of error in conducting national assessments of gang problems are matters of policy, not technology" (Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996b: 32). Local law enforcement databases are designed to track individual gang members for possible apprehension, not to compile aggregate statistical information. Compiling national gang homicide data through surveys of law enforcement agencies involves asking them "to provide us with a service they may not routinely provide for local assessment and policy making" (p. 33). This must be kept in mind when using law enforcement data in compiling aggregate statistics.

Major Measurement Issues

The most critical issue in measuring gang homicides concerns the definition used in attributing homicides to gangs. Some law enforcement agencies count only ***gang-motivated*** homicides—incidents that grow out of a gang function, such as territorial disputes, affiliation challenges, or ongoing rivalries between gangs. Other agencies use a more expansive definition, counting all events in which a gang member is involved in any capacity (***gang-related*** or ***gang-involved***). This factor can make a big difference in the resulting homicide count. Maxson and Klein (1990, 1996) found that the motive-based definitional approach law enforcement agencies use in Chicago produced homicide estimates only half as large as in Los Angeles, where agencies use the member-based recording method, although the depictions of the nature of Los Angeles gang homicides were remarkably similar, regardless of the definition used.

Fifty-eight percent of those who responded to the 1998 National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) survey said they used the member-based definition, 32 percent used the motive-based definition, and 10 percent used another definition (National Youth Gang Center 2000; see also Spergel and Curry 1993). Some agencies have positioned themselves to report counts using either definition (e.g., Los Angeles and Bloomington, IL). Nevertheless, the difficulty that police have in distinguishing gang-motivated from gang-involved homicides (Weisel and Painter 1997) produces considerable variation in the recording of gang homicides.

There are significant differences among law enforcement agencies and State statutes in how they define "gang" (Ball and Curry 1995; Curry et al. 1992; Klein 1995; Spergel 1995; Spergel and Curry 1993). The terms "youth gang" and "street gang" often are used interchangeably. "Criminal street gangs," a term formerly used exclusively to refer to adult criminal organizations, is now applied to youth gangs. Some jurisdictions call youth gangs by other names, such as "crews" or "posses." This ambiguity in gang definitions and offense classifications casts doubt on the validity of official gang homicide records and, consequently, on national surveys based on these records and police estimates.

These are not the only measurement problems that limit the quality of gang homicide data (Maxson 1998a). Another is underreporting and underestimation. The proportion of unsolved homicides has increased significantly since the mid-1980s (Snyder, Sickmund, and Poe-Yamaguchi 1996), partly as a result of witness intimidation (Maxson 1992). Other factors that lead to inaccurate reporting of gang homicides include the difficulties police encounter in investigating them, the lack of valid rosters of gang members, and the chaotic situations in which many homicides are committed (Maxson 1998a). Finally, acknowledging the existence of a gang problem is a prerequisite for counting gang homicides, at least for the analyses reported here.[2] The NYGC, which conducts the annual National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) used in the analyses reported here, readily acknowledges that law enforcement reporting on gangs is subject to local political considerations that may lead to exaggeration or denial of gang problems (NYGC 1999a). Approximately half of the respondents reported gang problems in each of the 1996, 1997, and 1998 NYGC surveys.

Underestimation of gang homicide is thus a concern for researchers who use law enforcement survey estimates. Yet underestimation is even more apparent in the Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data (Bailey and Unnithan 1994; Riedel forthcoming). The SHR reports only two categories of gang homicides: "gangland killings" (organized crime) and "juvenile gang killings." By definition, the latter category excludes young adult gang homicides. At least half of all gang homicide perpetrators and victims are at least 18 years old (Block et al. 1996; Klein and Maxson 1989).

How law enforcement officials view gang crime as a public safety concern could affect homicide reporting. For various reasons, officials in some cities deny the existence of gang problems altogether. In others, gang problems are downplayed as a matter of policy. For example, Curry and colleagues (Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996b) report that when their 1991 gang survey was conducted, the New York City Police Department included only crimes committed by Asian gangs. (At that time, Asian gangs were the gang-crime unit's only concern; African-American and Latin "drug organizations" came under the jurisdiction of the narcotics unit.) By 1994, New York City officials had developed a new system for identifying gang-related crimes and incidents that included African-American and Latin gang crime, and what was formerly identified as Asian gang crime was reclassified as part of "organized crime." Conversely, local law enforcement officials might overestimate gang homicides in response to "moral panics" (Jackson 1993; Zatz 1987), local political pressure, or unreliable witness accounts.

Reporting Trends

Two trends can be seen in gang data reporting today. States are increasingly expanding the domain of illegal gang activities for adjudication and sentencing purposes (Bureau of Justice Assistance 1997). Examples include enhanced penalties for shooting from an automobile, prohibitions against congregating in public areas, nuisance abatement laws, and severe sentences for gang offenders. Furthermore, gangs are increasingly defined more broadly for law enforcement intelligence and recordkeeping purposes. The new National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data collection uses the National Crime Information Center's definition of "gang": "An ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons [that] have a common interest and/or activity characterized by the commission of or involvement in a pattern of criminal or delinquent conduct" (FBI 1997a: 1). Similar definitions, incorporated into statutory codes in several States (for example, in California's Street Terrorism, Enforcement and Prevention Act), have likely influenced local jurisdictions' practices of defining gangs.

The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program is in the process of changing the way it collects information about gangs. In the late 1970s, the law enforcement community called for a thorough evaluative study of UCR to recommend ways the program could be expanded and enhanced to meet law enforcement needs into the 21st century. NIBRS was implemented in 1987 to provide more detailed information on crime incidents. As part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (also known as "The Crime Act"), Congress mandated that the Director of the FBI acquire and collect information on incidents of gang violence for inclusion in its annual Uniform Crime Report. The FBI began assembling information on incidents of gang violence for 11 violent offenses in September 1997. The Bureau has made substantial progress in establishing NIBRS as a viable, national gang-related crime statistics collection system, but it will be several years before the scope of coverage is sufficient to provide representative national data.

In the meantime, surveys of law enforcement agencies are the only source of national-level data on gang homicide and other gang crimes. A national database of gang homicides was constructed for this study using previous gang surveys of major cities and the NYGC national gang surveys conducted from 1995 to 1998.

Study Methodology

Cities were selected for inclusion in the study if they reported the number of gang-related homicides in their jurisdiction on surveys conducted by three teams of researchers covering the period from 1991 to 1998. The questions eliciting gang homicide data were similar in all three studies: the 1991 Curry survey (Curry et al. 1992), the 1991 Maxson-Klein survey (Maxson 1998a), and the 1995–1998 National Youth Gang Surveys (Egley 2000; NYGC 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2000).

Gang homicide data from these three surveys were examined in two ways. First, the trend from 1991 to the mid-1990s was identified for selected cities, surveyed by either Maxson and Klein or Curry in 1991, that also provided homicide data in the NYGC survey in 1996. The city matching for 1991 and 1996 was the only explicit comparison that could be made, because the three surveys used different samples. If no 1996 data were available for one of the cities, data from the 1995 NYGS were used for the mid-1990s comparison. This city-by-city comparison produced a view of gang homicide trends in selected cities in the first half of the decade. Second, gang homicide trends from 1996 to 1998 were examined using a single source, the NYGC survey. Together, these two sets of analyses produce a composite view of gang homicide trends from 1991 to 1998.

Curry's 1991 Survey

In the National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources study (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994), G. David Curry surveyed police departments in all 79 U.S. cities with populations of at least 200,000 by 1990 census estimates. He also included 43 smaller cities and selected counties that had been surveyed in 1988 by the National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program (Spergel and Curry 1990, 1993). In Curry's survey, a group had to meet the following criteria to be identified as a youth gang:

- Be identified as a "gang" by law enforcement.
- Involve some level of participation by juveniles.
- Engage in criminal activity.

More than 90 percent of the police departments contacted responded to the survey, and the 72 largest cities all reported at least 1 gang-related homicide.

The Maxson-Klein 1991 Survey

The Maxson-Klein National Gang Migration study (Klein 1995; Maxson 1998a; Maxson, Woods, and Klein 1995, 1996) surveyed police departments in 1,105 cities. All 190 U.S. cities with populations of more than 100,000 were included. Smaller cities and towns were added to the sample, based on other information about cities that either had local street gangs or had experienced gang migration. For purposes of the survey, gangs were defined as "groups of adolescents or young adults who see themselves as a group (as do others) and have been involved in enough crime to be of considerable concern to law enforcement and the community" (Maxson, Woods, and Klein 1995: 10). Survey recipients were instructed to include drug gangs in their response. They were asked to provide the number of gang-related homicides in the reporting jurisdiction for 1991. More than 90 percent of the police departments contacted responded, and 299 cities reported at least 1 gang-related homicide.

The National Youth Gang Center Surveys

The 1996–98 NYGC surveys were administered to a representative sample of U.S. city and county jurisdictions. The same jurisdictions were contacted in each survey. The sample consisted of—

- All 1,216 police departments serving cities with populations of 25,000 or more.
- All 662 suburban-county police and sheriffs' departments (FBI 1995).
- A randomly selected representative sample of 400 police departments serving cities with populations between 2,500 and 25,000.
- A randomly selected representative sample of 742 rural-county police and sheriffs' departments (FBI 1995).

The youth gang definition in the NYGC surveys was broader than those used in the two 1991 surveys. For the purposes of the 1996–98 NYGC surveys, a youth gang was defined as "a group of youths in your jurisdiction that you or other responsible persons in your agency or community are willing to identify or classify as a 'gang'" (NYGC 1999a: 56). Respondents were asked to exclude motorcycle gangs, hate or ideological groups, prison gangs, and adult gangs. The 1996 survey asked respondents: "How many homicides involving gang members occurred in your jurisdiction in 1996?" A followup question clarified whether this figure was limited to gang-motivated homicides. Subsequent surveys requested separate counts of member- and motive-based homicides (NYGC 1999b: 48; NYGC 2000: 54).

In 1996, 2,629 of the 3,018 agencies contacted responded to the survey (an 87 percent response rate) (NYGC 1999a). In 1997, the response rate was 92 percent (NYGC 1999b), and in 1998, it was 88 percent (NYGC 2000). (For additional information on the methods used in the three surveys, see NYGC 1999a, 1999b, 2000.) Of the cities with populations greater than 25,000, 73.7 percent responded to all 3 surveys and 99.1 percent responded to at least 1 of them. Reports of gang problems in these cities were rather stable from 1996 to 1998. More than 8 in 10 cities (82.6 percent) with populations greater than 25,000 reported the same pattern over the 3-year period (either consistently reporting gang problems or consistently reporting no gang problems). Approximately 6 percent reported an emergent gang problem during the 3-year period, 8 percent reported that their gang problems had desisted, and only 3 percent perceived an intermittent gang problem.

The estimated number of gang homicides (based on responses to NYGC's annual survey and extrapolated for the Nation as a whole) decreased somewhat from 1996 to 1998.[3] In 1996, gang members were responsible for an estimated 2,925 homicides in large cities and suburban counties in the United States (NYGC 1999a: 32).[4] This estimate dropped to 2,676 in 1997 (NYGC 1999b: 15) and to 2,642 in 1998 (NYGC 2000), but 5 large cities reported erratic numbers of gang homicides, making the national figures somewhat suspect. These cities are excluded from the analysis reported here.

With this exception, all cities that indicated gang problems in response to at least one of the two 1991 surveys and all cities that reported gang problems in the 1996–98 NYGC surveys were included in the analyses. Cities were chosen as the unit of analysis for this study because of the authors' interest in examining city trends, the possibility of some overlap in survey responses between counties and cities, and the number of gang-related homicides in small towns and rural areas that produce less reliable statistical comparisons. Where the same cities were surveyed in both 1991 surveys, responses to the Maxson-Klein survey were used for consistency because many more cities were contacted in that survey.

Census data for 1990 were used to determine city size for the cities in the 1991 dataset, and 1994 Census Bureau population estimates were used for the cities in the 1996–98 dataset. All three NYGC surveys asked respondents to estimate the number of gangs and gang members.

Findings

City-by-City Homicide Trends: Early to Mid-1990s

Gang homicide trends from the early to mid-1990s were examined by comparing homicide data from the 408 cities from which homicide reports were received in 1991 by Maxson and Klein or Curry with figures from the same cities reported in the 1996 NYGC survey.[5] In 1991, the 408 cities reported 1,748 gang homicides. By 1996, that figure had dropped to 1,492, a total decrease of 14.6 percent. This substantial net decrease in gang homicides among mid-to-large-sized cities is encouraging. Yet these total counts mask conflicting patterns among individual cities. A decrease in gang homicides was observed in 31.9 percent of the 408 cities, whereas 28.7 percent showed an increase. The remainder (39.4 percent) stayed the same from 1991 to 1996.

Approximately one-third of the cities whose homicide counts remained the same reported no homicides at either data point. In most cases, the observed patterns of change (i.e., increasing or decreasing) involved small numbers of homicides. Most cities reported fewer than 10 gang homicides in any given year. The magnitude of the change in homicide counts within cities is not addressed systematically here, but can be assumed to be minor in most, but not all, cities. The overall net decrease in gang homicide numbers suggests that the magnitude of the change was greater in cities with a decreasing pattern. This issue will be revisited later in the chapter.

National City Trend: 1996–98

Gang homicide data from 1996 to 1998 were taken from the annual NYGC survey data for 1996,[6] 1997,[7] and 1998[8] and analyzed to determine whether the net decrease in the first half of the decade continued into its second half. The bulk of reported gang homicides occur in the largest cities, but until this study, gang homicide figures for smaller cities had not been examined. Yet the distribution of gang homicides nationwide by city size is a question that can be resolved empirically. The 1997 NYGC survey (1999b: 15, Table by Jurisdiction Type) shows that two-thirds to three-fourths of all gang homicides occur in jurisdictions with populations greater than 25,000. Sparsely populated areas are even less likely to have persistent gang homicide problems. Of the 347 municipalities with populations of 25,000 or less, only 15 reported 1 or more homicides for all 3 years in the NYGC survey. Therefore, this analysis focuses on gang homicide trends in 3 years of NYGC surveys in the 1,216 municipalities with populations greater than 25,000.[9]

The analysis begins with a composite description of gang homicides in these cities over the 3-year period. In the next section, year-to-year homicide trends are examined. The unit of analysis for this section is cities that reported gang problems *and* gang homicides over the 3-year period from 1996 to 1998. There was a great deal of stability in the reporting of gang problems among these jurisdictions. Almost two-thirds of the sample (64 percent) reported gang problems on all three surveys. Only 231 (19 percent) of the 1,216 cities with populations greater than 25,000 reported "no gang problem" on all 3 surveys. The remaining 985 (81 percent) reported a gang problem in at least 1 of the 3 years.

Of these 985 cities, 968 provided gang homicide statistics to one of the NYGC surveys.[10] Exhibit 1 displays the highest annual count of gang homicides reported from 1996 to 1998 in these 968 cities and groups them by population size. In an era in which there is great concern about lethal gang violence, it is worth noting that most cities that reported having a gang problem (54 percent) experienced *no* gang homicides during this period.

Clearly, the number of gang homicides is associated with city population size. Ninety-nine percent of the cities that reported no gang homicides have a population of less than 200,000 (see exhibit 1). Only 5 cities with populations

Exhibit 1: Largest Number of Gang Homicides Reported for 1996, 1997, or 1998, by City Size

	Population				
	25,000–49,999	50,000–99,999	100,000–199,999	200,000 and Above	
Number of Gang Homicides Reported	Cities Reporting This Many Homicides	Cities Reporting This many Homicides	Cities Reporting This Many Homicides	Cities Reporting This Many Homicides	Total Cities Reporting
0	340	163	24	5	532
1–10	140	135	78	30	383
11–50	2	3	10	30	45
51–100	0	1	2	3	6
100+	0	0	0	2	2
Total	482	302	114	70	968

	Population			
	25,000–49,999	50,000–99,999	100,000–199,999	200,000 and Above
Number of Gang Homicides Reported	Percent of Cities in Category	Percent of Cities in Category	Percent of Cities in Category	Percent of Cities in Category
0	70.5	54.0	21.1	7.1
1–10	29.0	44.7	68.4	42.9
11–50	0.4	1.0	8.8	42.9
11–50	0.0	0.3	1.8	4.3
100+	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

greater than 200,000 reporting gang homicides at least once on the 1996, 1997, or 1998 surveys reported no gang homicides on either of the other two surveys. Further research might examine the gang situations in these five cities to determine likely explanations for this unexpected finding. The absence of gang homicides in these cities may reflect departmental recording policies.

The overwhelming majority (88 percent) of the 436 cities reporting at least 1 gang homicide over the 3-year period reported between 1 and 10 homicides as the highest number for any year within that period. Ten percent (45 cities) reported between 11 and 50 homicides, and just 2 percent (8 cities) reported more than 50 homicides in any 1 year. Cities with larger populations reported more gang homicides. Fifty percent of cities with gang problems and populations greater than 200,000 experienced more than 10 gang homicides in at least 1 of the 3 years. Comparable levels of gang homicides were reported in just 10 percent of the cities with populations between 100,000 and 200,000 and in 1 percent or less of cities in the two smaller population categories.

The 3 years of NYGC survey data also permit analysis of trends over a brief period. Among the 985 cities, 237 reported a gang problem in all 3 years and provided a gang homicide statistic in 1996, 1997, and 1998. There were 1,293 gang homicides in these cities in 1996, 1,260 in 1997, and 1,061 in 1998. For these cities, the peak homicide year was about evenly distributed: 32.5 percent each reported their peak number of gang homicides in 1996 and 1997, and 35 percent reported theirs in 1998. Among these 237 cities, 49 percent reported a decrease in gang homicides, 15 percent reported no change, and 36 percent reported an increase. A similar pattern was observed in a comparison of the first and last homicide reports among the 376 cities that provided a homicide statistic for at least two of the three surveys. Nearly half (48 percent) of these cities reported a decrease in gang homicides, 14 percent reported no change, and 38 percent reported an increase.

Yet this analysis of national trends masks some interesting changes within a few large cities. Five large cities—Denver, Knoxville, Phoenix, Rochester, and Seattle—showed steady increases in gang homicides over the 3-year period (exhibit 2); three additional cities—Kansas City, KS (from 6 to 34), Detroit (from 5 to 75), and New York (from 17 to 59)—showed dramatic increases from 1997 to 1998; and five cities—Long Beach, CA, Las Vegas, Santa Ana, CA, St. Paul, and Toledo—showed steady decreases in gang homicides over the 3-year period (exhibit 3).

Exhibit 2: Large Cities With Gang Problems That Experienced Steady Increases in Gang Homicides, 1996–98

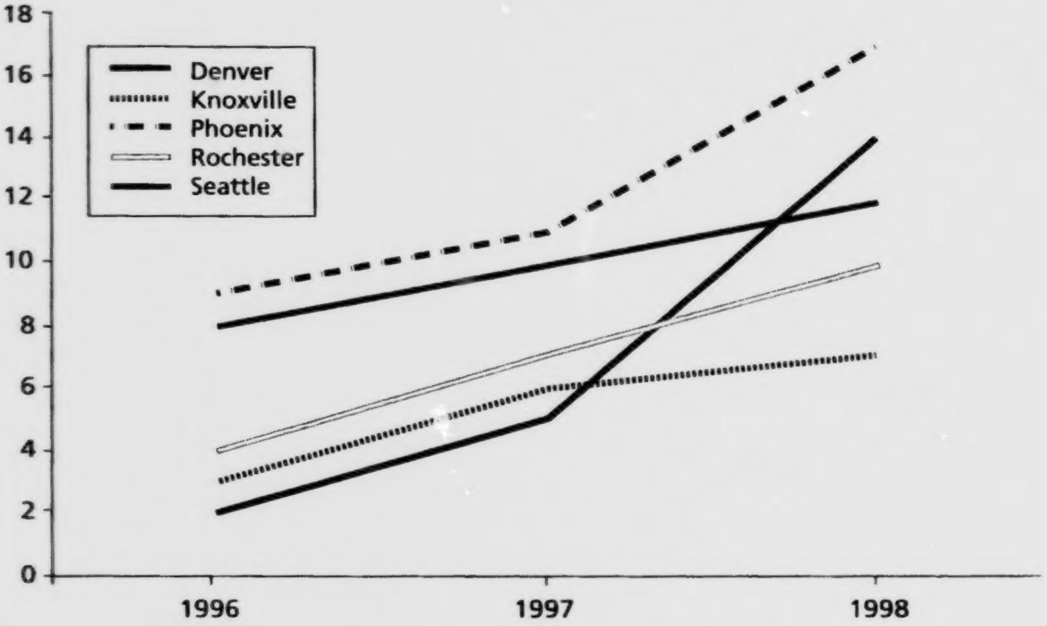
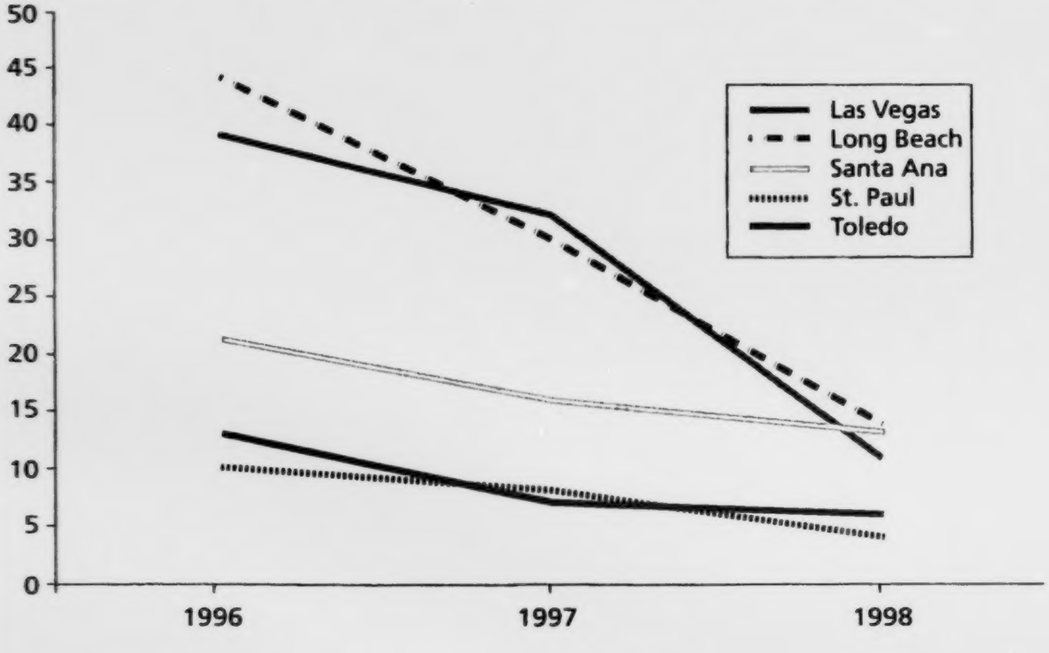


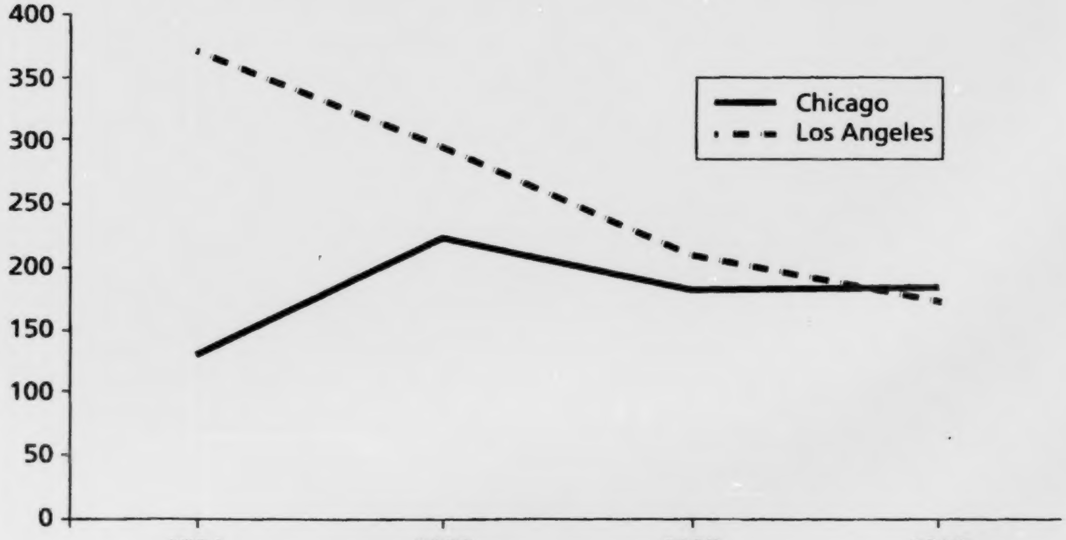
Exhibit 3: Large Cities With Gang Problems That Experienced Steady Decreases in Gang Homicides, 1996–98



Of course, none of these cities is comparable to Los Angeles and Chicago with respect to the annual number of gang homicides. These two cities stand out among the 8 cities with the most gang homicides and also show marked changes in homicides over this period (exhibit 4). In 1998, Los Angeles reported 173 gang homicides and Chicago reported 180.[11] Both cities reported substantial decreases in gang homicides from 1996 to 1998, with Los Angeles reporting a far greater decrease than did Chicago. (Los Angeles reported a drop from 295 homicides in 1996 to 173 in 1998, a 41-percent decrease, whereas gang homicides in Chicago dropped from 223 in 1996 to 180 in 1998, a 19-percent decrease.) Together, gang homicides in these two cities dropped by 165. Thus, Los Angeles and Chicago contributed significantly to the drop in gang homicides from 1996 to 1998, accounting for 71 percent of the decrease in homicide numbers over this period.

This finding emphasizes the importance of considering magnitude of change in homicide levels. Although 49 percent of cities reported decreasing trends in homicide numbers, the vast majority of the decrease in lethal gang violence came in the two cities with the largest gang populations. Chicago and Los Angeles have been the focus of gang research for several decades (see Maxson and Klein, forthcoming, for a detailed review), and this analysis of gang

Exhibit 4: Gang-Related Homicides in Chicago and Los Angeles, 1991 and 1996–98



homicide trends both underscores the importance of these two cities in any discussion of gang violence in America and reinforces how the gang patterns in these two cities differ from the gang situation in other parts of the country.

Correlates of Youth Gang Homicides

The original intent of this study was to determine the characteristics of cities associated with different national trends in gang homicide levels during the 1990s, using population change characteristics, such as changes in economic and sociodemographic patterns, to explain increases or decreases in gang homicides. Such analyses could be quite useful for policy and theoretical purposes, especially as a basis for an examination of law enforcement programs, policies, and practices in cities experiencing changes in homicide levels. The value of such an exercise, however, was diminished by the results of the analyses reported above. In a nutshell, gang homicide levels changed very little during this period. Most cities with gang problems report no gang homicides, and most cities reporting gang homicides report relatively few incidents. Although many cities (85 percent of the cities included in the 1996–98 analysis) experienced minor fluctuations in small incident numbers, just a few cities account for most of the decrease in the total number of homicides. Researchers working with the far more detailed, incident-based datasets in Chicago and Los Angeles can more ably address the dynamics in those two cities.

Given the context of these findings, only a quite limited analysis of the correlates of gang homicide during the 1996–98 NYGC survey period is possible. Los Angeles and Chicago were excluded from the analysis as outliers because their large numbers of gangs, gang members, and gang homicides would confound the results. They are the only cities reporting more than 100 gang homicides in any year from 1996 to 1998 (see exhibit 1). Five cities with large, erratic numbers of reported homicides were also excluded as outliers.

In the first analysis, population size (using the 1994 Census Bureau estimates) and number of gangs (measured as the highest number reported in the 1996 or 1997 surveys) were tested to determine whether they distinguished cities reporting gang problems but no gang homicides from cities reporting at least one gang homicide. As expected, both differences were found to be statistically significant. Cities with gang homicides were more likely than others to have larger populations (a mean of 128,237 versus 54,406 persons) and a larger number of gangs (a mean of 30 versus 8 gangs).

Next, the correlation between population, largest number of gangs, largest number of gang members, and largest number of gang homicides over the 3-year period (1996–98) was examined. For this analysis, cities reporting 1 to 49 gang homicides during the 3-year period were included. The relationships between population, number of gangs, number of members, and number of gang homicides are positive and significant. The number of gangs and gang members are strongly correlated with population size (.668 and .701, respectively) and with the number of gang homicides (.436 and .667, respectively). As expected, gang homicides are highly correlated with population size (.592).

Neither police practitioners nor researchers should be surprised by these results. Gang homicides are more frequent in larger cities having more gangs and more gang members. Subsequent analyses could have produced rates of gang homicides per gang member or population size, but a previous effort in this direction by one of the authors revealed several analytical and reporting problems (see Maxson 1998a). The limited examination of correlates of gang homicide reported in this section is not particularly helpful for guiding intervention policy; these findings serve merely to reinforce the importance of efforts to prevent adolescents from joining gangs.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The examination of gang homicide trends from 1991 to the mid-1990s used paired cities from three gang surveys (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994; Maxson, Woods, and Klein 1995; NYGC 1999a). This is the only explicit comparison that could be made, given that the three surveys used different sampling frames. This analysis showed that from the early to mid-1990s, reported gang homicides in more than 400 cities decreased by 15 percent, slightly less than the 17-percent decrease in the total number of homicides among 14- to 24-year-olds from 1991 to 1996[12] (Fox and Zawitz 2000).

The 15-percent drop provides little comfort when two other findings from this analysis are considered. First, much of this decrease (30 percent) comes from a drop in gang homicides in just one city—Los Angeles. Second, this analysis also indicates that the percentage of cities with a decrease in gang homicides (32 percent) is similar to the percentage of cities with an increase (29 percent). Most cities' (39 percent) reported gang homicide levels remained exactly the same, and most cities that showed some change did so in small increments.

The examination of gang homicide trends from 1996 to 1998 used the annual NYGC survey of all cities with populations of more than 25,000. This analysis showed that nearly half of the more than 400 cities that reported gang homicides from 1996 to 1998 reported a decrease in gang homicides, whereas 14 to 15 percent reported no change and 36 to 38 percent reported an increase. Of the more than 200 cities that reported a gang problem and a gang homicide statistic in all 3 years, 49 percent reported a decrease in gang homicides, 15 percent reported no change, and 36 percent reported an increase. Compared with the first part of the decade, a larger proportion of cities in the late 1990s reported decreases as well as increases, and a smaller proportion stayed the same. Although these observations suggest that the gang homicide picture was more dynamic in the latter part of the decade than in the early to mid-1990s, the magnitude of change within cities for both periods was minor. There have been substantial reductions in gang homicides in certain large cities (e.g., Los Angeles and St. Louis) and some stabilization (as in Chicago), but there are still some cities, such as Denver, Knoxville, Phoenix, Rochester, and Seattle, where gang homicides have continued to increase.

Four clusters of gang homicide cities are found among municipalities with populations greater than 25,000. The first cluster contains Chicago and Los Angeles, which stand alone, far above other cities, in the number of reported gang homicides on the 1996–98 NYGC surveys. In 1998, they reported a total of 353 gang homicides. The second cluster, 6 cities, reported more than 50 homicides in at least 1 of the 3 years (Baltimore, Compton, Detroit, Gary, Indianapolis, and New York). The third cluster contains 45 cities that reported between 11 and 50 gang homicides in at least 1 year in the 3-year period. Nearly 400 (383) other cities with populations greater than 25,000 reported from 1 to 10 gang homicides on at least 1 of the 3 surveys.

Finally, the analysis of the correlates of gang homicides showed that cities with gang problems that report gang homicides are more likely than others to have large populations, large numbers of gangs, and large numbers of gang members. While these findings are not surprising, the extent of the concentration of gang homicides in very large cities is revealing. Of the 532 cities with populations greater than 25,000 that reported no gang homicides in the 1996–98 NYGC surveys, only 1 percent had populations of at least 200,000. Despite the proliferation of gangs in cities of all sizes in the 1990s (NYGC 1999a), gang homicides remain far more of a problem in the Nation's largest cities.

Policy Recommendations

The finding that 436 of our Nation's cities experienced gang homicide in at least 1 of the 3 years (1996 to 1998) indicates that gang violence is a prevalent and persistent problem in the United States. The encouraging finding of a net decrease in the total number of gang homicides is offset by the more sobering finding that the level of gang homicide did not change substantially in the vast majority of cities. Despite annual declines in national youth homicide figures during the 1990s, just a few cities produced most of the reduction in gang homicides reflected in the trend analysis. Four policy recommendations are suggested by this study's findings.

First, it would be useful if large cities with serious gang problems continue to be the subject of intense scrutiny regarding the causes of and the solutions to violent gang activity. Examples of such efforts can be found in other chapters of this volume. Analysis of the detailed, incident-based homicide datasets already produced in some large cities should continue to be supported. Information on gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs implemented in these cities could be linked to these datasets to provide a better understanding of changes in gang violence levels.

Second, the hundreds of cities that report gang homicides should continue to be monitored via national surveys like the NYGS. If substantial changes in incident numbers become evident, analysis of these changes should include population measures derived from the census and other national databases (see Jackson 1991 for examples of demographic and economic transition variables used to predict the presence of gangs). The issue of magnitude of change should be considered carefully; big changes in small gang homicide numbers may be related to factors different from those that explain small changes in big numbers.

Third, Federal policymakers might lead an effort to improve data sources on gang homicides and other forms of gang activity. Any national assessment is severely constrained by the data limitations described earlier in this chapter. Research on the reliability and validity of gang reporting practices is also essential. Variations in local practices for defining and recording gangs and gang membership undoubtedly have an impact on the designation and reporting of gang crime. There is not sufficient consensus among law enforcement practitioners regarding optimal definitions to get them to agree to uniform policies, but efforts to build such a consensus should be encouraged. Building knowledge about the national patterns of gang homicide will be very difficult until reporting practices are standardized.

As the effort to develop uniform definitions takes place, it would be useful if the structures for gang homicide reporting could be expanded to incorporate incident-level descriptions. The NIBRS system may eventually fill this need, but pending its adoption in populous States, immediate changes could be made in the SHR reporting system. Recording officially established gang membership for any participant in a homicide and gang-related motives or circumstances in the SHR system would permit the kind of detailed analysis of the characteristics of different forms of gang homicide that is currently available in only a handful of cities. Examination of patterns of weapon use, incident locations, relationships between victims and offenders, and participant demographic characteristics such as age, race or ethnicity, and gender would considerably improve our understanding of the dynamics of gang homicide.

Finally, gang homicide trends and patterns of demographic and situational characteristics should be compared with trends for other forms of homicide and other forms of violence. In some cities, such as Chicago and Los Angeles, gang homicides represent a substantial proportion of all homicides. Changes in gang homicides can be fully understood only when placed in the context of the patterns of other forms of homicide. The same observation applies to less lethal forms of violence. Analysts and policymakers should be in the position to know whether gang assaults increase during periods of homicide decreases. Furthermore, since assaults are far more common than homicides, changes in the levels and characteristics of gang assaults might be the more useful barometer of the effectiveness of gang intervention programs.

These recommendations for further research and policies require improved data sources and data collection strategies. This study reports the results of an exploratory assessment of a national dataset built from previous studies. In a Nation with more than 400 cities reporting gang homicides, it is critical to establish a national database for the examination of trends in gang violence. This study offers a starting point for analyzing patterns of gang homicide and strongly encourages the further development of data sources to further understand the dynamics of gang violence and responses to gangs.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter, the term "gang" is used to refer to "youth gangs," "street gangs," or "criminal street gangs." Each term may have different connotations for different audiences, but the authors make no distinction among them here.

2. It is possible that a gang homicide may have occurred in a city that reported it had no gang problem. The NYGS format terminated the survey following a negative response to the gang problem item, so homicides in these cities would not have been captured by the survey.

3. The number of youth gang homicides reported in the 1995 NYGC survey cannot be compared with the reported numbers for 1996–1998, because the sample of jurisdictions surveyed in 1995 was not nationally representative.

4. Too few respondents in less populated jurisdictions reported youth gang homicides to extrapolate numbers nationwide.

5. No 1996 data were available for 8.3 percent of the cities. In these cities, data from the 1995 NYGS were used for the second mid-1990s comparison point.

6. In 1996, 785 of 1,037 cities with populations greater than 25,000 (that could provide an answer) reported a gang problem (76 percent) and 693 (88 percent) of these provided a statistic on gang homicides (of which 62 percent reported none). In 1996, 267 cities reported at least 1 gang homicide. These 267 cities reported 1,821 homicides in 1996.

7. In 1997, 786 of 1,071 cities with populations greater than 25,000 (that could provide an answer) reported a gang problem (73 percent) and 728 (92 percent) of these provided a statistic on gang homicides (of which 64 percent reported none). In 1997, 265 cities reported at least 1 gang homicide. These 265 cities reported 1,734 member-based and 890 motive-based homicides in 1997.

8. In 1998, 736 of 1,049 cities with populations greater than 25,000 (that could provide an answer) reported a gang problem (70 percent), and 691 (94 percent) of these provided a statistic on gang homicides (of which 66 percent reported none). In 1998, 234 cities reported at least

1 gang homicide. These 234 cities reported 1,783 member-based and 897 motive-based homicides in 1997.

9. Only one suburban county, Los Angeles County, reported more than 100 gang-involved homicides on any of the three NYGC surveys: 124 in 1996, 124 in 1997, and 70 in 1998.

10. Seventeen cities (1.7 percent) reported that the number of gang homicides in the jurisdiction was not known for all years when a gang problem was reported. The survey results made it possible to distinguish between member-based and motive-based gang-involved homicides, and almost all jurisdictions used one or the other of the definitions. In this analysis, the larger of the two numbers (always the member definition) was chosen for the few jurisdictions where both types of definitions are used.

11. Los Angeles reports gang-related homicides and Chicago reports only gang-motivated homicides.

12. The comparison with national homicide data is not a precise one, because youth gang membership is not restricted to 14- to 24-year-olds. Adults older than age 24 could be responsible for a significant proportion of gang homicides.

References

Bailey, G., and N.P. Unnithan. 1994. "Gang Homicides in California: A Discriminant Analysis." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 22(3): 267–275.

Ball, R.A., and G.D. Curry. 1995. "The Logic of Definition in Criminology: Purposes and Methods for Defining 'Gangs.'" *Criminology* 33(2): 225–245.

Block, C.R., A. Christakos, A. Jacob, and R. Przybylski. 1996. *Street Gangs and Crime: Patterns and Trends in Chicago.* Chicago: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

Brewer, V.E., K.R. Damphousse, and C.D. Adkinson. 1998. "The Role of Juveniles in Urban Homicide: The Case of Houston, 1990–1994." *Homicide Studies* 2(3): 321–339.

Bureau of Justice Assistance. 1997. *Urban Street Gang Enforcement.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCJ 161845.

Cohen, J., D. Cork, J. Engberg, and G. Tita. 1998. "The Role of Drug Markets and Gangs in Local Homicide Rates." *Homicide Studies* 2(3): 241–262.

Cohen, J. and G. Tita. (1998). "The Drugs-Gangs-Guns Nexus of Homicide in Pittsburgh, 1987–1995." Unpublished manuscript. Carnegie Mellon University, School of Public Policy and Management.

Curry, G.D., R.A. Ball, and S.H. Decker. 1995. "An Update on Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping." Unpublished manuscript. St. Louis, University of Missouri, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

———. 1996a. *Estimating the National Scope of Gang Crime from Law Enforcement Data*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 161477.

———. 1996b. "Estimating the National Scope of Gang Crime from Law Enforcement Data." In *Gangs in America,* (2nd ed.) Ed. C.R. Huff. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 21–36.

Curry, G.D., R.A. Ball, and R.J. Fox. 1994. *Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 148345.

Curry, G.D., R.J. Fox, R.A. Ball, and D. Stone. 1992. *National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 147399.

Curry, G.D., C.L. Maxson, and J.C. Howell. 2001. *Youth Gang Homicides in the 1990's*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, FS 200103.

Curry, G.D., and I.A. Spergel. 1988. "Gang Homicide, Delinquency, and Community." *Criminology* 26(3): 381–405.

Egley, A., Jr. 2000. *Highlights of the 1999 National Youth Gang Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, FS 200020.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 1995. *Crime in the United States, 1994: Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

———. 1997. *Uniform Crime Reporting*. State Program Bulletin, June 30. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Fox, J.A., and Zawitz, M.W. 2000. *Homicide Trends in the United States: 1988 Update*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 179767.

Howell, J.C. 1999. "Youth Gang Homicides: A Literature Review." *Crime and Delinquency* 45(2): 208–241.

Hutson, H.R., D. Anglin, and M.J. Pratts. 1994. "Adolescents and Children Injured or Killed in Drive-By Shootings in Los Angeles." *New England Journal of Medicine* 330: 324–327.

Hutson, H.R., D. Anglin, D.N. Kyriacou, J. Hart, and K. Spears. 1995. "The Epidemic of Gang-related Homicides in Los Angeles County from 1979 through 1994." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 274 (13): 1031–1036.

Hutson, H.R., D. Anglin, C. Reek-Asa, D.N. Kyriacou, and J.F. Kraus. 1999. "The Relationship Between Socioeconomic Factors and Gang Violence in the City of Los Angeles. *Journal of Trauma—Injury, Infection, and Critical Care* 46(2): 334–339.

Jackson, P.I. 1991. "Crime, Youth Gangs, and Urban Transition: The Social Dislocations of Postindustrial Economic Development."*Justice Quarterly* 8(3): 379–397.

Jackson, P. 1993. "Moral Panic and the Response to Gangs in California." In *Gangs: The Origins and Impact of Contemporary Youth Gangs in the United States,* ed. S. Cummings and D.J. Monti. Albany: State University of New York Press: 257–275.

Kennedy, D.M., and A.A. Braga. 1998. "Homicide in Minneapolis: Research for Problem Solving." *Homicide Studies* 2(3): 263–290.

Kennedy, D.M., A.A. Braga, and A. Piehl. 1997. "The (Un)known Universe: Mapping Gangs and Gang Violence in Boston." In *Crime Mapping and Crime Prevention,* ed. K.D. Weisburd and J.T. McEwen. New York: Criminal Justice Press: 219–262.

Kennedy, D.M., A.M. Piehl, and A.A. Braga. 1996. "Youth Violence in Boston: Gun Markets, Serious Youth Offenders, and a Use-Reduction Strategy. *Law and Contemporary Problems* 59(1): 147–196.

Klein, M.W. 1995. *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Klein, M.W., and C.L. Maxson. 1989. "Street Gang Violence." In *Violent Crime, Violent Criminals,* ed. M.E. Wolfgang and N.A. Weiner. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 198–234.

Maxson, C.L. 1992. "Collecting Data from Investigation Files: Descriptions of Three Los Angeles Gang Homicide Projects." In *Questions and Answers About Lethal and Non-Lethal Violence*, ed. C.R. Block and R. Block. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 142058: 87–95.

———. "Gang Homicide." In *Studying and Preventing Homicide,* ed. M.D. Smith and M.A. Zahn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 197–219.

———. 1998b. *Gang Members on the Move.* Juvenile Justice Bulletin: Youth Gang Series. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 171153.

Maxson, C.L., and M.W. Klein. 1990. "Street Gang Violence: Twice as Great, or Half as Great?" In *Gangs in America*, ed. C.R. Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 71–100.

———. 1996. "Defining Gang Homicide: An Updated Look at Member and Motive Approaches." In *Gangs in America* (2nd ed.), ed. C.R. Huff. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 3–20.

———. (Forthcoming). "'Play Groups' No Longer: Urban Street Gangs in the Los Angeles Region. In *From Chicago to L.A.: Making Sense of Urban Theory*, ed. M.J. Dear. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxson, C.L., K. Woods, and M.W. Klein. 1995. "Street Gang Migration in the United States." Unpublished manuscript. Center for the Study of Crime and Social Control. Social Science Research Institute, University of Southern California.

———. 1996. "Street Gang Migration: How Big a Threat?" *National Institute of Justice Journal* 230, February 26–31.

Miller, W.B. 1975. *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Groups in Major American Cities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 137446.

———. 1992. *Crime by Youth Gangs and Groups in the United States.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 156221.

National Youth Gang Center. 1997. *1995 National Youth Gang Survey: Program Summary.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 164728.

———. 1999a. *1996 National Youth Gang Survey: Summary.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 173964.

———. 1999b. *1997 National Youth Gang Survey.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 178891.

———. 2000. *1998 National Youth Gang Survey.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 183109.

Riedel, M. Forthcoming. "Homicide in Los Angeles County: A Study of Latino Victimization." In *Interpersonal Violence: The Ethnicity, Race, and Class Nexus,* ed. D.F. Hawkins. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Snyder, H.N., M. Sickmund, and E. Poe-Yamagata. 1996. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 159107.

Spergel, I.A. 1995. *The Youth Gang Problem.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Spergel, I.A., and G.D. Curry. 1990. "Strategies and Perceived Agency Effectiveness in Dealing with the Youth Gang Problem." In *Gangs in America,* ed. C.R. Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 288–309.

———. 1993. The National Youth Gang Survey: A Research and Development Process. In *The Gang Intervention Handbook*, ed. A. Goldstein and C.R. Huff. Champaign, IL: Research Press: 359–400.

Thornberry, T.P. 1998. "Membership in Youth Gangs and Involvement in Serious and Violent Offending." In *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*, ed. R. Loeber and D.P. Farrington. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 147–166.

Weisel, D.L., and E. Painter. 1997. *The Police Response to Gangs: Case Studies of Five Cities.* Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum.

Zahn, M.A., and K.M. Jamieson. 1997. "Changing Patterns of Homicide and Social Policy." *Homicide Studies* 1(2): 190–196.

Zatz, M.S. 1987. "Chicano Youth Gangs and Crime: The Creation of a Moral Panic." *Contemporary Crises,* 11(2): 129–158.

Chapter 5

National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program

Finn-Aage Esbensen, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Missouri–St. Louis

Adrienne Freng, Ph.D.
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Wyoming

Terrance J. Taylor
Dana Peterson
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska–Omaha

D. Wayne Osgood, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology
Pennsylvania State University

Acknowledgments

Funding for this research was provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, U.S. Department of the Treasury, with additional support (award 94–IJ–CX–0058) from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The authors wish to thank their colleagues who assisted with various aspects of this evaluation project: Drs. Tom Winfree, Chris Sellers, Libby Deschenes, Fran Bernat, and Ron Taylor, as well as numerous research assistants who assisted with data collection.

Abstract

Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.), a school-based program for middle school students, is designed to help them avoid peer pressure to join gangs through cultivation of such life skills as social competence, problem solving, and responsibility. Funded by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the program is a prevention strategy consisting of a series of classroom lessons taught by specially trained law enforcement personnel. A national evaluation of the program was conducted to determine whether it was succeeding. The cross-sectional evaluation was based on an analysis of the program in 11 cities. The longitudinal study, based on an analysis of G.R.E.A.T. in six cities, compared the experiences of participants and nonparticipants at yearly intervals up to 4 years after program completion. The results of the initial cross-sectional evaluation were favorable. The 2-year results of the longitudinal evaluation were that there were no statistically significant differences in social attitudes or behavior between the two groups. Then, after 4 years, there appeared to be a lagged effect, with G.R.E.A.T. students exhibiting more positive social attitudes than non-G.R.E.A.T. students. The contradiction between the cross-sectional and 2-year longitudinal findings prompted a review and revision of the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. It suggested greater involvement of the regular classroom teacher and more focus on active learning than lecturing. The recommendations were accepted and the new curriculum was tested in the spring of 2001.

This chapter describes the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program, a school-based gang prevention program targeting middle school students. Also described are the research design and results of a longitudinal national evaluation of this program, funded in 1994 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). For that evaluation, a quasi-experimental research design was implemented in six cities to assess the program's impact. The results of that evaluation are reported here and reflect short-term (posttests administered within 2 weeks of program completion) and long-term effects (2 and 4 years after program completion). This chapter also details how these results have been used to revise the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum.

Analyses based on the 2-year followup data failed to detect statistically significant differences between the G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. students. The 4-year followup analyses, however, resulted in significant differences between the two groups: G.R.E.A.T. students reported more positive social attitudes 4 years after program completion than did the non-G.R.E.A.T. students.

Partly in response to the null findings from the 2-year followup data, the G.R.E.A.T. administration sought help in enhancing the program. A working group was formed, which included G.R.E.A.T. officers and administrators, staff members from the national evaluation, and experts in gangs and school-based gang prevention programs. The group reviewed the G.R.E.A.T. program and recommended ways to improve it. Officers were retrained in the new curriculum, and pilot programs were taught in middle schools during the spring of 2001.

What Is G.R.E.A.T.?

> In 1991, Phoenix law enforcement formed a partnership with local educators and community leaders to develop an innovative, comprehensive anti-gang program. The result was G.R.E.A.T., Gang Resistance Education and Training, supported by funding from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

The preceding statement appears on most publications associated with the G.R.E.A.T. gang prevention program, which consists of eight lessons provided in nine 1-hour sessions taught by specially trained law enforcement personnel. The intent of the lessons is to provide students with "the necessary skills and information to say no to gangs and become responsible members of society" (*G.R.E.A.T. Brochure* n.d., 3). According to G.R.E.A.T. publications, the program's mission is "To provide a wide range of structured activities and classroom instruction for school-aged children that result in a sense of competency, usefulness and personal empowerment needed to avoid involvement in youth violence" (*G.R.E.A.T. News* 1994, 1). To see how these goals were accomplished, the authors reviewed the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum and program delivery, which are described below.

G.R.E.A.T. is a classroom-based, officer-instructed program generally taught in the seventh grade. The point of providing the program to students at this age and grade level is to communicate the message that "gangs have nothing to offer" before gang recruitment begins in earnest. As initially created, the lessons included the following:

- ***Introduction.*** Students become acquainted with the program and the officer.
- ***Crimes/Victims and Your Rights.*** Officers demonstrate the impact crime can have on victims and neighborhoods.
- ***Cultural Sensitivity/Prejudice.*** Students learn cultural differences and their impact on the community.
- ***Conflict Resolution.*** Officers create an atmosphere of understanding to enable all parties to better address problems and work on solutions together (two sessions).
- ***Meeting Basic Needs.*** Students are taught how to become better equipped to meet their basic needs.
- ***Drugs/Neighborhoods.*** Officers teach students the effects drugs can have on a neighborhood.
- ***Responsibility.*** Students learn the diverse responsibilities of individuals in a community.
- ***Goal Setting.*** Officers teach students how to set long-range goals.

A review of these lessons and the detailed lesson plans and workbook exercises that accompany them shows that the content of the program is nothing startling or entirely new for students in this age group. By the seventh grade, they should have been exposed to most, if not all, of the ideas contained in the lessons. A key element of the G.R.E.A.T. program is that the "teachers" are police officers, sheriff's deputies, town marshals, military police officers, and (in a few cases) agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. In addition, the eight lessons, spaced over nine classroom sessions, synthesize the content of many other classes that students have been exposed to during their school years. Thus, the officers in this program seek to link what seventh grade students may view as unrelated pieces of information.

In their report on the early history of the G.R.E.A.T. program, Winfree, Lynskey, and Maupin (1999) relied on interviews with "key players" and documents provided by the Phoenix Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to recreate the program's historical development. It is evident from this report that the current G.R.E.A.T. curriculum was the product of an intense effort by several Phoenix Police Department officers to produce a product in a short time. Because of the officers' considerable experience as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®)[1] officers and mentors, the G.R.E.A.T. program, as developed, resembled the D.A.R.E.® program. Little attention, it appears, was given to pedagogical and developmental issues, let alone to the prevention literature. Despite these shortcomings, the officers produced a curriculum and a training model that were generally well received by educators, parents, and other law enforcement representatives.

As the curriculum indicates, the G.R.E.A.T. program is intended to provide life skills that empower adolescents to resist peer pressure to join gangs. The strategy is a cognitive approach (similar to the D.A.R.E.® and to the Law Related Education program, which is based on the notion that juvenile delinquency is caused by a lack of awareness of the laws and seeks to teach students about law and the legal process) designed to produce attitudinal and behavioral change through instruction, discussion, and role playing.

Another notable feature of the G.R.E.A.T. program is its target population. Unlike suppression and intervention programs, which are directed at youths who already are gang members, G.R.E.A.T. is intended for all students. This is an example of the classic, broad-based prevention strategy found in medical immunization programs: broad intervention with a simple and relatively unintrusive program well before any problem is detectable and without attempting to predict who is most likely to be affected by the problem.

To date, two published evaluations have reported that the program has had small, but positive, effects on students' attitudes and behavior (Esbensen and Osgood 1999; Palumbo and Ferguson 1995). Esbensen and Osgood (1999) reported the findings from the cross-sectional component of the

National Evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program. Based on surveys completed by 5,935 eighth-grade students (1 year after program completion) in 11 cities across the continental United States, the study found that G.R.E.A.T. graduates reported committing fewer delinquent acts and expressed more positive social attitudes, including more favorable attitudes toward the police, higher levels of self-esteem and attachment to parents, and greater commitment to school. Using a multisite, pretest/posttest research design, Palumbo and Ferguson (1995) found that G.R.E.A.T. graduates had a "slightly increased ability" to resist pressures to join gangs. The authors acknowledged, however, that "the lack of a control group prevents assessments of the internal validity. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the results . . . were due to G.R.E.A.T. as opposed to other factors" (Palumbo and Ferguson 1995: 600).

The Longitudinal National Evaluation

In 1994, the National Institute of Justice sponsored a national evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program. The research design involved a process evaluation that examined program delivery (Sellers, Taylor, and Esbensen 1998), a preliminary impact evaluation (Esbensen and Osgood 1999), and a longitudinal, quasi-experimental outcome study.

Although development of the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum was not theory driven, the design of the national evaluation was. The theories determined to be most relevant in evaluating the program were social learning theory (Akers 1985) and self-control theory (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Identification of relevant theoretical constructs is critical in evaluating prevention programs because prevention, by definition, takes place well before the outcome that the program is designed to prevent (i.e., gang membership) is likely to occur. In brief, a positive effect on attitudes should produce a subsequent reduction in delinquent behavior. This evaluation therefore emphasized theoretical constructs that relate logically to the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum and are theoretically and empirically linked to gang membership and delinquency. A more detailed account of the theoretical foundations of the national evaluation is given in an earlier report (Winfree, Esbensen, and Osgood 1996).

The student questionnaires used in the national evaluation consisted of attitudinal and behavioral questions. Measures of perceptions of the appropriateness of certain behaviors and measures of peer group conduct were of primary importance. Given the significant role of peer pressure in gangs and delinquency, several scales were used to measure the commitment the youths felt to their peer group. The questionnaire also measured student involvement in school and community activities.

One of the more important objectives of the G.R.E.A.T. program is to reduce adolescent involvement in criminal behavior and gangs; this involvement was measured through self-reports of illegal activity. This technique has been used widely since the early 1970s and provides a good measure of actual behavior, rather than a reactive measure of police response to behavior (e.g., Hindelang, Hirschi, and Weis 1981; Huizinga 1991; Huizinga and Elliott 1986). Questions measuring self-reported drug use and victimization were also included in this section of the questionnaire.

Another important focus of the questionnaire was measurement of gang membership and gang activity. Two filter questions were used to determine gang membership: "Have you ever been a gang member?" and "Are you now in a gang?" Students answering yes to either of these questions were then asked about gang structure, gang activity, and attitudes about the gang. Also included were queries to determine the following: identification of good and bad aspects of gang membership, approval of gang membership, measures of gang attachment, and reasons for joining the gang.

Longitudinal Research Design

The two previously published evaluations of the G.R.E.A.T. program discussed above contained methodological limitations. The Palumbo and Ferguson (1995) study did not include a comparison group; the Esbensen and Osgood (1999) evaluation used a cross-sectional design, an approach that lacks a pretest measure and requires the ex post facto creation of a comparison group. Although statistical procedures can strengthen the validity of this method (e.g., Heinsman and Shadish 1996), it is generally considered a weak design (e.g., Sherman et al. 1997). The longitudinal research strategy implemented in the current evaluation, with a strong quasi-experimental[2] research design and assignment of classrooms to treatment and control groups, served two very important functions. First, the evaluation team believed, this assignment process should create groups of G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. students who are at equal risk for future delinquency and gang involvement. Second, the longitudinal research design would greatly increase statistical power for detecting program effects by controlling for previous individual differences and examining change over time.

Site Selection

Six cities were selected for the longitudinal phase of the National Evaluation. The first criterion for selection was the existence of a viable G.R.E.A.T. program in 1995; a second criterion was geographical location. A third criterion was the cooperation of the school districts and the police departments in each site. These criteria led to selection of an east coast city (Philadelphia), a west coast location (Portland, Oregon), the site of the program's inception (Phoenix), a Midwest city (Omaha), a small city with little or no gang presence (Lincoln, Nebraska), and a small border town with a chronic gang problem (Las Cruces, New Mexico).

Research Design

The longitudinal study included relatively equal-sized groups of treatment (G.R.E.A.T.) and control (non-G.R.E.A.T.) students in the seventh grade at five of the sites and sixth grade students in the sixth.[3] Because G.R.E.A.T. is a classroom-based program, assignment was implemented for classrooms rather than for individual students; that is, classrooms in each school were assigned either to receive G.R.E.A.T. or to serve as a control classroom and not receive G.R.E.A.T. The sample included a total of 22 schools, 153 classrooms, and more than 3,000 students. During the fall of 1995, students in all the selected classrooms completed pretests before G.R.E.A.T. instruction began in the treatment classrooms. Within 2 weeks of completing the 9-week program, all students were surveyed again. The pretests made it possible to compare the two groups on all measures before program intervention. These analyses revealed no preexisting systematic differences between students in the G.R.E.A.T. classrooms and those assigned to the control group. The posttests allowed for examination of immediate, short-term programmatic effects. To assess whether the G.R.E.A.T. program had any sustained effect, surveys were administered during each of the subsequent 4 years (in the fall of 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999) to all students for whom active parental consent had been obtained (see Active Consent Procedures). Although some students were lost because of the active consent process or mobility in subsequent years, questionnaire completion rates exceeded industry standards (see Questionnaire Completion Rates).

Active Consent Procedures

The University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board approved a research design that allowed passive parental consent during the pre- and posttest data collection (i.e., students were surveyed unless a parent refused their participation). These surveys were conducted 2 weeks before and after delivery of the G.R.E.A.T. program. Active parental consent was planned for the subsequent annual surveys (only those students for whom signed permission was obtained from a parent were surveyed). These procedures were also approved by each of the participating school districts.

A modified Dillman (1978) total design method was used to obtain the active consent forms, although the specific procedures varied slightly for timing and sequencing across the six sites. The following account serves as an "ideal type" of the procedures followed.

During the spring and summer of 1996, three direct mailings were made to parents of survey participants. Included in the mailings were a cover letter, two copies of the parent consent form for student participation, and a business reply envelope. As Phoenix and Las Cruces had substantial Spanish-speaking populations, mailings to parents in these cities included Spanish versions of the cover letter and consent form. All parents not responding after the second mailing were contacted by telephone. School personnel also cooperated by distributing consent forms and cover letters at school. Teachers in all classrooms involved in the evaluation assisted with this process, rewarding students with a new pencil upon return of the forms. Some teachers agreed to allow us to offer incentives, such as pizza parties, to classrooms in which a minimum of 70 percent of students returned a completed consent form. Other teachers offered their own incentives, including earlier lunch passes and extra-credit points. This process resulted in an overall response rate of 67 percent (57 percent providing affirmative consent and 10 percent withholding consent), while 33 percent of parents failed to return the consent forms. (For a more detailed discussion of the active consent process and examination of the effects of active consent procedures on the representativeness of the sample, see Esbensen et al. 1999.)

Questionnaire Completion Rates

Completion rates for the student survey were excellent. Of the 2,045 students for whom active parental consent had been obtained at the six sites, 1,761 surveys (86 percent) were completed at the 1-year followup and 1,550 (76 percent) at the 2-year followup. Given the multisite, multischool sample and that respondents at five of the six sites made the transition from middle school to high school between the year 1 and year 2 surveys, this completion rate is commendable. Hansen and colleagues (1985) examined attrition in a meta-analysis of 85 longitudinal studies and reported an average completion rate of 72 percent for the 19 studies with a 2-year followup period; few of these 19 studies included multisite samples. Tebes, Snow, and Arthur (1992) reported on the attrition rates from middle school to high school. In their study examining differential attrition for different age groups, they reported losing 41.3 percent of their sample between eighth and ninth grade.

In the present study, considerable difficulty was encountered in retaining the student sample for the year 2 followup. As the cohort moved from middle school to high school and normal mobility patterns occurred, students in Omaha, Phoenix, and Philadelphia were enrolled in more than 10 different high schools in each city. To ensure these students' continued participation in the study, the evaluation team contacted officials at these schools. In some instances, these new schools were in different districts, which required approval from the necessary authorities to survey their students. Despite these logistical concerns, completed questionnaires were obtained from 76 percent of the sample at the year 2 followup. In the third (1998) and fourth (1999) year surveys, this high standard of questionnaire completion was again achieved, with response rates of 69 and 67 percent, respectively, attained in 1998 and 1999.

Results of the Longitudinal Analysis of Program Impact

In this section, results are reported from the analysis of outcome effects 2 and 4 years after program completion. Due in part to congressional inquiries about program effectiveness, the G.R.E.A.T. management team had requested the 2-year outcome results. These interim results provided outcome measures based on student responses to the pre- and posttest surveys collected in 1995 and the 1- and 2-year followup surveys collected in 1996 and 1997, respectively. More complete outcome analyses, incorporating the third and fourth years of followup surveys, were reported on completion of the last scheduled surveys.

To assess program effectiveness, four levels of analysis were considered: the individual, change across time, classroom, and school. Examining individual change over time (i.e., identifying program effects on each individual who completed the G.R.E.A.T. course compared with those who did not) was no easy analytical task. Because students received the program within a classroom context, researchers had to control for classroom-level information. Likewise, classrooms were part of a larger school environment. Recently developed statistical programs (Bryk and Raudenbush's *Hierarchical Linear Models* [1992] and Goldstein's *Multilevel Statistical Models* [1995]) allow researchers to examine individual change across time, while controlling for group change across time and other "nested" conditions (individuals within classrooms and within schools), allowing an examination of the unique effect of G.R.E.A.T. on individual students. (For a detailed discussion of the design, analysis strategy, and longitudinal results, see Esbensen et al. 2001.)

Two-Year Followup Results

The most direct indication of program impact was a comparison of preprogram with postprogram survey data from the 1- and 2-year followup questionnaires. This comparison identified the degree to which change for the treatment group differed from that for the control group. Although the large sample afforded ample statistical power, only one of the 31 pre-post change comparisons was statistically significant at the standard .05 probability level (victimization, $p = .017$). With this large number of significance tests, 1.55 nominally significant findings could be expected by chance alone. Furthermore, most of the differences in change were quite small, and almost half of them indicated that the program had had an unfavorable impact. Based on these comparisons, it did not appear that the G.R.E.A.T. program had reached its goals.

Program Impact Under "Optimal" Circumstances

Why did this analysis fail to find that the G.R.E.A.T. program had a significant impact on student attitudes and behavior? Before accepting these results as indicating that the program had no benefits, other alternatives needed to be explored. For example, the program may have been implemented better in some sites than in others. If so, positive results in more optimal circumstances could have been masked by less favorable outcomes in others. To determine whether this was the case, the evaluation team repeated the above analysis, using only the three sites where process analysis indicated that program staff had been most successful in delivering the program as designed. Analysis was further restricted to classrooms in which at least 55 percent of students participated in the study. This analysis included 1,074 students from 55 classrooms in 11 schools.

The results for this more selective analysis closely matched those for the entire sample. Only 2 of 76 significance tests for program impact reached the .05 level of significance (fewer than would be expected by chance), and none reached the .01 level. Again, the results were as likely to favor the control group as the treatment group. In sum, the attempt to identify the best examples of the G.R.E.A.T. program in the sample yielded no evidence of program benefits. The lack of program effects in the overall analysis did not appear to be a matter of weaker programs masking the impact of stronger ones.

Variation in Program Effectiveness by Prior Risk

The evaluation team also explored the possibility that the impact of the G.R.E.A.T. program might depend on students' level of risk for delinquency and gang membership. Earlier cross-sectional analyses of program impact had examined the consistency of program effects across demographic groupings (Esbensen and Osgood 1999) and found that G.R.E.A.T. was more effective with groups at higher risk for delinquency, specifically males and minorities. In the present longitudinal analysis, the data from the pretest measure allowed the team to measure risk of future delinquency and gang membership directly, rather than inferring from demographic proxies. As with the preceding analyses of the 2-year followup data, however, no evidence was found that participating in the G.R.E.A.T. program produced favorable outcomes for students at high or low risk for antisocial outcomes.

Four-Year Followup Results

On completion of the fourth year of data collection, outcome analyses were conducted incorporating all six waves of student responses: pretest, posttest, year 1, year 2, year 3, and year 4 surveys. The same analytical strategies reported above were used for the 2-year followup analyses. Contrary to the interim results, however, the evaluation team found a 4-year lagged effect of the G.R.E.A.T. program. Four years after program completion, students who had been assigned to the G.R.E.A.T. program reported more positive social attitudes and behaviors on 25 of the 29 outcome measures; five of these differences were statistically significant at the .05 level. Students in the G.R.E.A.T. program reported lower levels of risk-seeking and victimization, more positive attitudes toward the police, more negative attitudes toward gangs, and more friends involved in positive social activities than students in the control group.

The results based on the full longitudinal dataset support a modest program effect (effect sizes of approximately 0.10). Several questions, however, must be addressed: Why was there no measurable program effect 2 years after program delivery? Why did the cross-sectional study, which surveyed students 1 year after program delivery, produce favorable programmatic effects? What factors can explain a 4-year lagged effect? From a policy perspective, should interim results, such as the 2-year followup, be reported? As discussed in the next section, the null findings from the 2-year analyses contributed to a rigorous review of the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum.

The G.R.E.A.T. Review

Because of the contradictory findings from the cross-sectional and the 2-year longitudinal study results, the National Policy Board (NPB) of the G.R.E.A.T. program wanted a board of experts to review the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. In response, NIJ funded a review of the G.R.E.A.T. program, and in 1999 the G.R.E.A.T. Review Workgroup was convened to conduct a critical assessment of G.R.E.A.T. The NPB deserves recognition for its willingness to seek recommendations from researchers. The G.R.E.A.T. review process was extraordinary in that G.R.E.A.T. program administrators took the evaluation's findings seriously and sought to improve the content and implementation of their program based on these findings. Their willingness to subject the program to critical review, which could result in recommendations for substantial program revision, is uncommon and demonstrates their commitment to the prevention of gangs and violence.

The G.R.E.A.T. Review Workgroup was made up of G.R.E.A.T. officers and administrators, staff members from the national evaluation, and experts in gangs or school-based prevention programs. This group met three times during early 1999 and addressed four tasks. First, the workgroup reviewed the research on American youth gangs on the following questions: What constitutes a gang, and what risk factors are associated with gang membership? Next, since G.R.E.A.T. is a school-based prevention program, the workgroup reviewed the research evaluating the effectiveness of such programs to see what kinds of strategies had been implemented and which elements had been found to reduce delinquency or violence. The workgroup then turned its attention to G.R.E.A.T.'s core curriculum, critically examining the extent to which it contained elements found to be effective and ineffective in delinquency and violence prevention. Finally, the workgroup outlined the structure of an enhanced curriculum that incorporates elements known to be effective in preventing delinquency and violence. Although some components of the G.R.E.A.T. curriculum were retained, the proposed revised curriculum contains many new elements.

An important first step in developing a gang prevention program is identifying the risk factors associated with joining gangs. Thus, the workgroup reviewed this literature, giving special consideration to individual, peer, family, and school factors found to be predictive of gang membership. As this literature has been summarized elsewhere (e.g., Curry and Decker 1998; Hill, Howell, Hawkins, and Battin-Pearson 1999; Howell 1995, 1998), only a cursory overview is provided below.

Youth gangs are found throughout the United States, and there has been an apparent increase in the number of youth gangs and gang members since the mid-1980s. Many theories have emerged to explain the formation of gangs and why youths join them. Hagedorn (1988), Jackson (1991), and Klein (1995) are among those who argue that gang formation is a product of postindustrial development. The early work of Thrasher (1927) and other Chicago-based gang researchers emphasized the importance of structural and community-level factors and indicated that delinquency in general, and youth gangs in particular, were a product of the social environment. Given that most youths residing in areas where gangs are present choose not to join gangs, however, there must be some other reason why some youths decide to join them. As Malcolm Klein (1995, 75–76), in his summary of the literature of the demographic characteristics of gang members, aptly observes:

> In regard to who joins street gangs, then, first, it is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes more often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families. . . . [M]ost youths from such areas, such groups, and such families do *not* join gangs (emphasis added).

It must also be added that youth gang membership is not an exclusively male phenomenon (see, for instance, Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen and Winfree 1998).

Several consistent attitudinal differences have been found between gang members and nongang youths. Representative of the differences reported are the findings from a Seattle study, in which Hill and colleagues (1999) found that gang youths held more antisocial beliefs than youths who were not gang members. Maxson and her colleagues (1998) found that gang members had a more delinquent self-concept, were more likely to resolve conflict by threats, and had experienced more critical stressful events than nongang youths. More generally, both studies found significant differences between gang and nongang youths within multiple contexts (i.e., individual, school, peer, family, and community characteristics).

As with delinquency research, one consistent finding from the gang research is the overarching influence of peers on adolescent behavior (e.g., Hill et al. 1999; Menard and Elliott 1994; Warr and Stafford 1991). In their comparison of stable and transient gang youths, Hill and colleagues reported that the strongest predictors of sustained gang affiliation were a high level of interaction with antisocial peers and a low level of interaction with prosocial peers. Researchers have examined the influence of peers through various measures, including exposure to delinquent peers, attachment to delinquent peers, and commitment to delinquent peers. However this peer affiliation is measured, the results are the same: Association with delinquent peers is one of the strongest predictors (i.e., risk factors) of gang membership.

Although less commonly examined by gang researchers, school factors also have been consistently associated with the risk of joining gangs. Research indicates that gang youths experience lower levels of commitment to school than do nongang youths (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen and

Deschenes 1998; Hill et al. 1999; Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein 1998). Some gender differences have been reported, however; in the Rochester study (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993), for example, school expectations were not predictive of male gang membership. Ethnographic reports also attest to the role of school factors in explaining gang membership (e.g., Campbell 1991; Fleisher 1998; Hagedorn 1988).

A second step in developing a school-based prevention program is to assess the success of previous programs and current practices. (For a thorough review of these school-based programs, see Gottfredson 1997.) A brief overview of this literature is provided below.

Some evidence suggests that in schools that use a participatory management style, where administrators and teachers actively communicate and collaborate, teacher morale is higher and there is less disorder. Schools with clear rules and reward structures also experience less disorder. And considerable evidence suggests that "smaller is better"—larger schools experience higher levels of violent crime than do smaller schools (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985; Kaufman et al. 1998). Some attribute this to more effective informal social control, whereas others are likely to attribute this to demographic variables. Regardless, the consensus is that smaller schools experience less violence and other disruptive behaviors.

Teaching styles and classroom organization also have been examined as possible violence prevention strategies. One effective approach involves cooperative learning strategies, whereby teachers provide initial instruction to students, after which students are divided into groups of four to five students of mixed skill levels; students help each other learn, but generally take tests individually. This approach has been associated with higher academic achievement, more positive attitudes toward school, better race relations, and acceptance of special education students who have been mainstreamed. The consensus is that these improvements in educational performance may also be associated with reductions in violence (Brewer et al. 1995).

Consistent with research on parental discipline and parenting strategies, the most important aspect of classroom and school management approaches is consistency and fairness in applying the rules. Teachers and administrators have learned that having clear rules, enforcing those rules, and positive feedback are key elements of school safety (Gottfredson 1997).

Several programs target the individual, seeking to change attitudes and, thus, behavior. These programs tend to focus on increasing knowledge and skills while changing beliefs. Most of the programs that focus directly on crime and violence prevention (including G.R.E.A.T.) can be classified as individual change strategies. To date, evaluations of these strategies have provided mixed results (Brewer et al. 1995; Drug Strategies 1998). In isolation, however, these programs do not appear to have the desired effect.

One such program that has received considerable attention is the Life Skills Training (LST) program developed by Gil Botvin (Botvin 1998). Developed as a drug prevention program, it may also provide beneficial information for gang prevention. LST is a 3-year intervention (15 lessons in the first year, with 10 booster sessions in the second year, and 5 in the third) designed to be implemented in school classrooms. Students are taught a set of general self-management and social skills and provided with information and skills that are directly related to drug abuse. At face value, this program is not that different from D.A.R.E.®, G.R.E.A.T., and other individual change strategies. It differs, however, in its instructional approach, which emphasizes skills development rather than knowledge assimilation. Problem-solving exercises and a combination of instructional strategies are key aspects of the program. Evaluations of LST have reported reductions in drug use and positive effects on mediating variables, such as interpersonal and communication skills (Botvin 1998).

After reviewing the literature described above, the G.R.E.A.T. Review Workgroup carefully examined the overall objectives of the G.R.E.A.T. program and the content of its curriculum. The workgroup recognized that unlike suppression and intervention programs, which target youths already in gangs, G.R.E.A.T. targets all youths, seeking to provide life skills to empower adolescents to resist peer pressure to join gangs. This strategy is meant to be a cognitive approach that produces attitudinal and behavioral change through instruction, discussion, and role playing. The workgroup found, however, that the curriculum lacked many of the elements necessary to prevent delinquency.

In examining each curriculum lesson, the workgroup identified which, if any, components were consistent with the elements of effective prevention programs. The workgroup also searched for learning strategies within the curriculum, such as cooperative learning and active student and teacher participation, that were consistent with effective prevention efforts. For example, classroom observations and reports from officers indicated that the classroom teacher was not integrated into the actual G.R.E.A.T. lessons (Sellers, Taylor, and Esbensen 1998). At G.R.E.A.T. officer training, the officers are encouraged to engage teachers in the lessons and give them supplemental activities.

This rarely occurred, however; teachers tended to treat the lesson time as a free planning period or a coffee break.

A primary concern was whether the curriculum focused sufficiently on providing students with social competency skills. The curriculum contained lessons on goal-setting, responsibility, and problem solving, and portions of lessons at least touched on having empathy for victims, developing positive social affiliations, and altering perceptions about gangs. Most of the lessons, however, were found to be didactic, relying primarily on lecture and information dissemination. Moreover, the skills being taught were presented in isolation from one another, with little effort to revisit earlier skills and build upon them. Although each lesson contained a group activity, the emphasis on information dissemination precluded students from practicing the skills they were taught (Sellers, Taylor, and Esbensen 1998). Finally, the curriculum notably lacked such social competency skills as stress management, emotional control, and communication.

Because it was charged with conducting a critical review of the G.R.E.A.T. program and recommending improvements, the G.R.E.A.T. Review Workgroup outlined a "revised" G.R.E.A.T. program and submitted it to the NPB. As revised, this program would continue to be taught in the first year of middle school, with recommended booster sessions in each subsequent year of middle school and, if possible, in high school. The workgroup also recommended that supplemental programs, such as the current summer and parent components, be retained and possibly expanded.

The workgroup identified the following goals and objectives of the G.R.E.A.T. program for the NPB's approval and verification:

- Goals—
    - To reduce gang membership.
    - To prevent violence and criminal activity.
    - To develop positive relationships with law enforcement.
- Objectives—
    - To improve social competency skills (emotional control; stress management; conflict resolution; communication and listening; and decisionmaking, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills).

- To foster empathy for victims.
- To encourage positive social affiliations.
- To alter perceptions about gangs.
- To increase social responsibility.

In developing a curriculum outline, the workgroup intended to structure the curriculum around social competency skills, which would be reinforced in future lessons. Each subsequent lesson added new material to address other program objectives (i.e., having empathy for victims, altering perceptions about gangs, developing positive social affiliations, and demonstrating social responsibility).

Given these goals and objectives, the workgroup produced the following outline for the revised G.R.E.A.T. program:

- Introduction
  - Lesson 1: Introduction
- Unit I: Interpersonal Skills
  - Lesson 2: Empathy
  - Lesson 3: Communication/Listening
- Unit II: Decision-Making
  - Lesson 4: Evaluating Input
  - Lesson 5: Problem-Solving
  - Lesson 6: Goal-Setting
  - Lesson 7: Social Responsibility
- Unit III: Conflict Resolution
  - Lesson 8: Emotional Control and Stress Management
  - Lesson 9: Conflict Resolution

Wrap-up and Culmination Activity

Research shows that middle school is a crucial transition point for adolescents. Thus, the workgroup recommended that G.R.E.A.T. be taught at middle school entry, whether it be sixth or seventh grade. Existing prevention literature also reinforced several issues that the Workgroup believed were important in any reconceptualization of the G.R.E.A.T. program. First, the literature recommended greater emphasis on incorporating the teacher into the lesson plan to enhance the reinforcement of lessons and skills learned. Second, the curriculum should focus more on active learning strategies, rather than relying on the didactic style used by most officers (Brewer et al. 1995; Catalano, Loeber, and McKinney 1999; Gottfredson 1997). Third, research documented the desirability of booster sessions to reinforce skills learned in prior years (Botvin 1998; Botvin et al. 1990).

The NPB accepted the workgroup's recommendations and by August 2000, a team of G.R.E.A.T. officers, curriculum writers, gang researchers, and experts in school-based prevention programs had written an "enhanced" curriculum. During the fall of 2000, officers were retrained in the new curriculum, and pilot programs were taught in the spring of 2001.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The G.R.E.A.T. program seeks to reduce adolescent involvement in crime and gangs. Before implementing the longitudinal, quasi-experimental study described in this report, the authors conducted a preliminary cross-sectional survey of students to assess program effectiveness. Findings from that research supported continuing the G.R.E.A.T. program (Esbensen and Osgood 1999). Initial results from the longitudinal quasi-experimental research design described in this chapter failed to replicate those favorable results. In response, a rigorous program review resulted in development of a revised G.R.E.A.T. curriculum. The 4-year results, however, were consistent with the cross-sectional results. At this juncture, it is necessary to assess these contradictory research findings and their consequences.

It is not uncommon for evaluations conducted with different samples and at different times to produce mixed results. The cross-sectional evaluation of the G.R.E.A.T. program was completed in 1995 in 11 cities using *anonymous* questionnaires completed by students under *passive parental consent* procedures. The longitudinal evaluation was conducted in six cities (four of which were included in the cross-sectional study) from 1995 to 1999 using ***confidential*** questionnaires restricted to those students for whom ***active parental consent*** had been obtained. After analyzing the year 2 followup data, the evaluation team considered several factors that could account for the null findings. Methodological differences (i.e., anonymous versus confidential questionnaires, different consent processes, and different samples) could have contributed to the contradictory results. With the subsequent findings of a 4-year lagged programmatic effect, however, attention turns to two questions: (1) What could account for the lagged program effects? and (2) Was the program review implemented after the interim results worthwhile?

The finding that G.R.E.A.T. students were more prosocial at the 4-year followup than were control students is curious and unexpected, especially since no such differences were observed at the 2-year followup. Yet other evaluations (the Perry Preschool Project and the Seattle Social Development Intervention) have reported similar lagged effects (Berrueta-Clement et al. 1984; Hawkins et al. 2000). The reason for this lag is unclear, although several possible interrelated explanations come to mind. First, young adolescence is a stressful and anxiety-filled stage, during which most adolescents are confused about appropriate attitudes and behaviors. Second, the organizational structure of American schools may contribute to this stress. At ages 11 or 12, children move from the comfort of relatively small, stable elementary schools to larger, more diverse middle or junior high schools; then, at ages 14 or 15, young adolescents are forced to make another transition to even larger, more diverse high schools. As they reach the ages of 16 and 17 (10th or 11th grade), some of the angst of adolescence is resolved and they have adapted to the high school setting. Thus, prior prevention or intervention experiences may begin to manifest themselves at this time. Before this maturation occurs, other factors may have obfuscated the effects of the prevention experiences.

In considering the utility of the program review, this exercise serves as an excellent example of cooperative collaboration between practitioners and researchers. The initial curriculum had been developed relatively quickly, with little input from education and prevention specialists. Six years after its development, the program had unexpectedly expanded nationwide. What had been developed as a local program for Phoenix was experiencing "growing pains," as some educators and G.R.E.A.T. officers called for a review of the curriculum. Thus, during a 3-day meeting in August 1997, a panel of officers and educators reviewed the G.R.E.A.T. lessons. This meeting failed to produce a consensus on proposed modifications and no changes were implemented. The presentation of the null findings from the 2-year followup evaluation to the NPB in October 1998 again prompted a program review, including examination of curriculum content and educational practices. The NPB should be acknowledged for its willingness to respond to evaluation results that did not support the program and for its desire to enhance the program's potential. Unlike the earlier review, this review produced a consensus and, as described earlier, led to the enhanced G.R.E.A.T. program that was tested in the spring of 2001.

Where does this leave us with regard to gang prevention policy? Can police officers be effective instructors? Given the lack of consistent findings on the effectiveness of the G.R.E.A.T. program, this is an important question. From a school safety and community policing perspective, however, it may be reasonable to continue this strategy. Some evidence indicates that the officers may have a small positive effect on student attitudes and behavior. Additionally, surveys completed with teachers and parents as part of the national evaluation revealed that most respondents favored school-based prevention programs and having officers instruct students and generally supported the G.R.E.A.T. program. A lingering question remains, however: How effective can individual-based prevention programs be in reducing gang involvement? As a review of risk factors reveals, a significant reduction in gang activity may be too much to expect from any program if the more fundamental causes and attractions of gangs (i.e., social, structural, community, and family conditions) are not simultaneously addressed.

To conclude, there may be no one "silver bullet" program or "best practice" for preventing gang affiliation and gang-associated violence. The youth gang problem may be best addressed through a comprehensive strategy (such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Comprehensive Gang Model) with a multifaceted approach that targets individual youths, as well as peer groups, family, school, and the community. G.R.E.A.T., in tandem with other programs, may prove to be one piece of a much larger solution.

Notes

1. D.A.R.E.®, Drug Abuse Resistance Education, is a school-based drug prevention program taught by uniformed law enforcement officers. This 16-lesson program targeting elementary school students has been widely accepted and implemented by police departments across the United States.

2. We had initially hoped to implement a true experimental design, but real-world conditions precluded true random assignment in two of the sites. Thus, the assignment of classrooms to G.R.E.A.T. and non-G.R.E.A.T. participation was achieved through negotiations with school personnel at each site.

3. Portland educators requested that the G.R.E.A.T. program be delivered at the entry year to middle schools (i.e., sixth grade). The G.R.E.A.T. management agreed to this arrangement and subsequently approved a policy of preferably implementing the program during the entry year to either middle school or junior high school.

References

Akers, Ronald, L. 1985. *Deviant Behavior: A Social Learning Approach.* 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Berrueta-Clement, J.R., L.J. Schweinhart, W.S. Barnett, A.S. Epstein, and D.P. Weikart. 1984. *Changed Lives: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youths through Age 19.* Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Bjerregaard, Beth, and Carolyn Smith. 1993. "Gender Differences in Gang Participation, Delinquency, and Substance Use." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 4: 329–55.

Botvin, Gil J. 1998. *Life Skills Training. Book Five of the Blueprints for Violence Prevention.* Boulder: University of Colorado Press.

Botvin, Gil J., E. Baker, A.D. Filazzola, and E.M. Botvin. 1990. "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Substance Abuse Prevention: One-Year Follow-up." *Addictive Behaviors* 15: 47–63.

Brewer, Devon, J. David Hawkins, Richard F. Catalano, and Holly J. Neckerman. 1995. "Preventing Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offending: A Review of Evaluations of Selected Strategies in Childhood, Adolescence, and the Community." In *A Sourcebook: Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders,* ed. James C. Howell, Barry Krisberg, J. David Hawkins, and John J. Wilson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications: 61–141.

Bryk, Anthony S., and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1992. *Hierarchical Linear Models: Applications and Data Analysis Methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Campbell, Anne. 1991. *The Girls in the Gang*. 2nd. ed. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Catalano, Richard F., Rolf Loeber, and Kay C. McKinney. 1999. *School and Community Interventions to Prevent Serious and Violent Offending*. Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, October, NCJ 177624.

Curry, G. David and Scott H. Decker. 1998. *Confronting Gangs: Crime and Community*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Dillman, Don A. 1978. *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Drug Strategies. 1998. *Safe Schools, Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies*. Washington, DC: Drug Strategies.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and David Huizinga. 1993. "Gangs, Drugs, and Delinquency in a Survey of Urban Youth." *Criminology* 31: 565–89.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and Elizabeth P. Deschenes. 1998. "A Multisite Examination of Youth Gang Membership: Does Gender Matter?" *Criminology* 36: 799–828.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and L. Thomas Winfree, Jr. 1998. "Race and Gender Differences Between Gang and Non-Gang Youth: Results from a Multi-Site Survey." *Justice Quarterly* 15: 505–26.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and D. Wayne Osgood. 1999. "Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.): Results from the National Evaluation." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36: 194–225.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, Michelle H. Miller, Terrance J. Taylor, Ni He, and Adrienne Freng. 1999. "Differential Attrition Rates and Active Parental Consent." *Evaluation Review* 23: 316–35.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, D. Wayne Osgood, Terrance J. Taylor, Dana Peterson, and Adrienne Freng. 2001. "How Great is G.R.E.A.T.?: Results from a Longitudinal, Quasi-Experimental Design." *Criminology and Public Policy* 1: 87–118.

Fleisher, Mark. 1998. *Dead End Kids*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Goldstein, Harvey. 1995. *Multilevel Statistical Models*. London: Arnold.

Gottfredson, Denise. 1997. "School-Based Crime Prevention." In *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising: A Report to the United States Congress*, ed. Lawrence W. Sherman, Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn Bushway. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 165366.

Gottfredson, Gary D., and Denise C. Gottfredson. 1985. *Victimization in Schools*. New York: Plenum.

Gottfredson, Michael R., and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

G.R.E.A.T. Brochure. n.d. "Ask the Phoenix Police Chief How the Fight Against Youth Gangs Is Going and He Will Give You A One Word Answer: GREAT." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Treasury.

G.R.E.A.T. News. 1994. G.R.E.A.T. Mission Statement. May 3: 1.

Hagedorn, John M. 1988. *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*. Chicago: Lakeview Press.

Hansen, William B., Linda M. Collins, C. Kevin Malotte, C. Anderson Johnson, and Jonathan E. Fielding. 1985. "Attrition in Prevention Research." *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 8: 261–75.

Hawkins, J. David, Jie Guo, Karl Hill, Sara Battin-Pearson, and Robert Abbott. 2000. "Long Term Effects of the Seattle Social Development Intervention on School Bonding Trajectories." Seattle: University of Washington, Social Development Research Group.

Heinsman, Donna T. and William R. Shadish. 1996. "Assignment Methods in Experimentation: When Do Nonrandomized Experiments Approximate Answers from Randomized Experiments?" *Psychological Methods* 1: 154–69.

Hill, Karl G., James C. Howell, J. David Hawkins, and Sara R. Battin-Pearson. 1999. "Childhood Risk Factors for Adolescent Gang Membership: Results from the Seattle Social Development Project." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36: 300–22.

Hindelang, Michael J., Travis Hirschi, and Joseph G. Weis. 1981. *Measuring Delinquency*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Howell, James C. 1995. “Gangs and Youth Violence: Recent Research.” In *A Sourcebook: Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders,* ed. James C. Howell, Barry Krisberg, J. David Hawkins, and John J. Wilson. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

———. 1998. “Promising Programs for Youth Gang Violence Prevention and Intervention.” In *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions,* ed. Rolf Loeber and David P. Farrington. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Huizinga, David. 1991. “Assessing Violent Behavior with Self-Reports.” In *Neuropsychology of Aggression,* ed. Joel Milner. Boston: Kluwer: chapter 3.

Huizinga, David, and Delbert S. Elliott. 1986. “Reassessing the Reliability and Validity of Self-Report Delinquency Measures.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 2: 293–327.

Jackson, Pamela I. 1991. “Crime, Youth Gangs, and Urban Transition: The Social Dislocations of Post-industrial Economic Development.” *Justice Quarterly* 8: 379–97.

Kaufman, Phillip, Xianglei Chen, Susan P. Choy, Kathryn A. Chandler, Christopher D. Chapman, Michael R. Rand, and Cheryl Ringel. 1998. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 1998.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice.

Klein, Malcolm W. 1995. *The American Street Gang.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Maxson, Cheryl L., Monica L. Whitlock, and Malcolm W. Klein. 1998. “Vulnerability to Street Gang Membership: Implications for Practice.” *Social Service Review* 72: 70–91.

Menard, Scott, and Delbert S. Elliott. 1994. “Delinquent Binding, Moral Beliefs, and Illegal Behavior: A Three-Wave Panel.” *Justice Quarterly* 11: 173–88.

Palumbo, Dennis J., and Jennifer L. Ferguson. 1995. “Evaluating Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.): Is the Impact the Same as That of Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)?” *Evaluation Review* 19: 591–619.

Sellers, Christine S., Terrance J. Taylor, and Finn-Aage Esbensen. 1998. "Reality Check: Evaluating a School-Based Gang Prevention Model." *Evaluation Review* 22: 590–608.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Denise Gottfredson, Doris MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn Bushway. 1997. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising: A Report to the United States Congress.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 165366.

Tebes, Jacob K., Davis L. Snow, and Michael W. Arthur. 1992. "Panel Attrition and External Validity in the Short-Term Follow-Up Study of Adolescent Substance Use." *Evaluation Review* 16: 151–70.

Thrasher, Frederick M. 1927. *The Gang: A Study of One Thousand Three Hundred Thirteen Gangs in Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Warr, Mark, and Mark Stafford. 1991. "The Influence of Delinquent Peers: What They Think or What They Do?" *Criminology* 29: 851–65.

Winfree, L. Thomas, Jr., Dana Peterson Lynskey, and James R. Maupin. 1999. "Developing a Local Police and Federal Law Enforcement Partnerships: G.R.E.A.T. as a Case Study of Policy Implementation." *Criminal Justice Review* 24: 145–168.

Winfree, L. Thomas, Jr., Finn-Aage Esbensen, and D. Wayne Osgood. 1996. "Evaluating a School-Based Gang Prevention Program: A Theoretical Perspective." *Evaluation Review* 20: 181–203.

▥ Chapter 6 ▥

Evaluating Nevada's Antigang Legislation and Gang Prosecution Units

Terance D. Miethe, Ph.D.
Richard C. McCorkle, Ph.D.
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nevada–Las Vegas

Acknowledgments

This project was supported by grant 94–IJ–CX–0053 awarded by the National Institute of Justice. The authors appreciate the helpful comments of Winifred L. Reed and Scott H. Decker on an earlier version of this paper.

Abstract

Like many other States, Nevada enacted antigang legislation to increase the severity and certainty of punishment for gang members and established gang prosecution units to improve the chances of successfully prosecuting gang crime. Little research has focused on these types of laws and gang units, however. The current study examines how often Nevada's antigang legislation has been used and the extent to which the gang units in the State's two largest counties, Clark (whose major city is Las Vegas) and Washoe (whose major city is Reno) have succeeded. The study revealed that the antigang statutes are widely used in some cases, when firearms are involved, but that convictions are the exception rather than the rule. When gang cases were compared before and after enactment of the legislation, no significant difference in conviction rates were found. Such charges as being an accessory, aiding and abetting, and racketeering are rare in both counties and have neither increased nor decreased as a result of the legislation. There were no differences between the gang units and the track (general) prosecution units in likelihood of conviction and imprisonment. The antigang statutes may provide additional leverage in prosecuting gang crime, because the threat of conviction under them may be an enticement to plead guilty on other charges. Special prosecution units can be an important arena for processing and adjudicating gang cases, although the decision to establish them will depend on the gravity of the gang problem and the expertise of the district attorneys.

Gang activity has become a major social problem in nearly all large U.S. cities. Teen violence (much of which is gang related) increased dramatically from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1993). Driveby shootings, drug-related homicides, and other types of criminal activities performed by gang members have been major contributors to this problem. Gang activity in the two largest cities in Nevada is no different. Police estimate that up to 6,000 active gang members and associates reside in Clark County (Las Vegas) and 1,000 in Washoe County (Reno). Las Vegas had 17 gang-related homicides and 280 driveby shootings in 1993, and more than 100 felonies involving gang members were reported to the Reno police in 1994. Rising gang violence in both cities, and a high-profile armed robbery of a casino by Los Angeles gang members, helped fuel a major perceived threat to the social and economic vitality of these metropolitan areas.

An increasingly popular response to gang activity has been the formation of specialized gang units within police departments and the district attorney's office. These collaborative efforts are designed to increase the gathering of intelligence on gang activity and gang membership, develop key community informants, and promote greater cooperation between crime witnesses and law enforcement in prosecuting gang members. Rigorous, successful prosecution of these offenders is especially important in overcoming the strong feelings of invulnerability and immunity to prosecution many gang members hold. One way to change these attitudes, and to ensure that the threat of legal sanction has any deterrent value, is to use gang units and criminal statutes to increase the severity and the certainty of punishment. This is the objective that underlies Nevada's antigang legislation and the development of gang prosecution units in Las Vegas and Reno.

Using various methodologies (e.g., content analysis, statistical analysis of case disposition, interviews of court personnel, and field observations), this study examines the frequency of application of Nevada's antigang legislation in criminal court practices and the relative effectiveness of the gang prosecution units used in Nevada's two largest counties.

Review of the Literature

Although systematic empirical data on gang prosecution practices are limited (see ILJ 1994; Conly 1993; Reiner 1992; Spergel 1990; McKinney

1988; Zatz 1985; Dahmann 1983), previous studies have examined the structure of gang units and special problems that arise in prosecuting gang cases. This section explores the structure and function of gang prosecution units, antigang legislation, the historical context of Nevada's antigang legislation, and characteristics of gang prosecution units in Clark (Las Vegas) and Washoe (Reno) Counties.

The Structure and Function of Gang Prosecution Units

It is widely recognized that gang offenses create severe problems for law enforcement and prosecution (see, for review, ILJ 1994; Curry et al. 1994; Reiner 1992; Spergel 1990; McKinney 1988; Klein et al. 1987; Maxson et al. 1987). Police often lack adequate intelligence on gang membership and structure to prove gang participation; the level of victim and witness cooperation is low, because of fear or intimidation or a preference for "street payback"; and many victims and witnesses lack credibility because they are also gang members. Gang offenses present major problems for prosecutors because these cases often—

- Span both juvenile and adult systems.
- Require detailed attention (with most district attorneys unable to take on gang cases because of their heavy caseloads).
- Demand specialized knowledge of how to use gang experts in courts, prove gang membership, and execute search warrants.

These problems are less severe in gang cases involving drug trafficking in which informants and police serve as witnesses. However, for cases involving violent gang activity, victim and witness problems are so acute that many prosecutors are more willing to use a current arrest to revoke a previous probation, which has less stringent evidentiary requirements, than to initiate prosecution on a new charge.

In response to these challenges, many jurisdictions have developed specialized gang units within police departments and district attorneys' offices (see, for review, ILJ 1994; Curry et al. 1994; Spergel 1991; Maxson et al. 1987). The structure and function of these gang units vary widely, however. For example, 50 attorneys in Los Angeles County's Hardcore Gang Division deal almost exclusively with gang-related homicides (see Genelin 1994; Reiner 1992), whereas only 3 deputy district attorneys are assigned to the gang unit to prosecute all gang offenses in Las Vegas. A national survey reveals that 32 percent of jurisdictions with populations of more than 250,000 have gang prosecution units, compared with only 5 percent in smaller jurisdictions (see ILJ 1994). Instead of having gang units, small counties may treat gang cases through an existing specialized unit (like drug, organized crime, or career criminal units) or simply tag gang cases, as they are received, for specialized attention or priority handling. Much of what is known about gang prosecution is derived from prosecution studies in the largest U.S. cities (especially Los Angeles and Chicago), which may provide little insight for law enforcers in smaller metropolitan areas that have less serious gang problems and fewer resources to devote to specialized units. Nonetheless, gang prosecution units across geographical areas seem to share several major structural features.

For example, a key feature of many gang units is the adoption of vertical prosecution. Under this approach, the same district attorney (and case investigator, depending on the jurisdiction) handles the case from preliminary hearing through sentencing. Vertical prosecution is widely advocated for gang cases and other complicated cases because it provides continuity over the life of the criminal complaint and takes advantage of specialized expertise. This continuity is especially important for developing and maintaining rapport with key witnesses. Prosecutors under a vertical system can more fully develop expertise on such matters as how to use gang experts in court, how to prove gang membership by issuing search warrants for multiple dwellings, why and how to use gang graffiti in court, how to use tattoos to prove gang membership, how to coordinate both juvenile and adult prosecutions, and how to provide evidence to support complex charges of conspiracy or aiding and abetting (see Genelin 1994). Although comprehensive studies of prosecutorial practices before and after implementation of vertical prosecution are rare (see Spergel 1991; Daley 1985; Dahmann 1983), most experts support this approach for gang prosecution (see Genelin 1994; ILJ 1994; McKinney 1988).

A second common feature of gang units across jurisdictions is the development of close working relationships with agencies in the criminal justice community. A cooperative exchange between the police, judiciary, and prosecution is a fundamental necessity for any district attorney, but good working relationships take on added importance in gang cases, in which evidentiary requirements for determining that a case is "gang related" and victim or witness testimony are far more problematic. Specialized gang units within police departments provide the necessary intelligence on gang membership, initiation practices, and offense specialization to establish elements required for successful prosecution (see Genelin 1994; Reiner 1992; Klein et al. 1987; Maxson et al. 1987). As one strategy for promoting cooperation, Los Angeles has developed an interagency gang task force to coordinate all agencies working on gang issues and created the Gang Reporting Evaluation and Tracking (GREAT) database to help law enforcement (see Reiner 1992; McKinney 1988). Reno, Nevada, in contrast, has made a full-scale commitment to community and problem-oriented policing as another strategy to coordinate gang abatement efforts (see Conly 1993).

Antigang Legislation

Most States have found traditional criminal law to be adequate in prosecuting crimes committed by gang members (ILJ 1994). In addition to existing criminal codes for violent, property, and narcotic offenses, prosecutors employ conspiracy, aiding and abetting, and drug kingpin statutes to reach those indirectly associated with the offense. RICO (Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization) statutes also have been proposed to target gang activity, but these statutes are often limited because they are designed for more sophisticated and sustained criminal activity than is typically found among street gangs (see ILJ 1994). Some gang-related offenses, like driveby shootings, also are not adequately covered under existing criminal laws. Over the past decade, new statutes that target criminal street gang activity have been enacted in 14 States to augment the existing criminal codes.

Although there are no comprehensive evaluations of prosecution, adjudication, and sentencing practices under antigang statutes, these legislative efforts may not be fully applied in actual criminal court practices for several reasons. First, under many State provisions, it is difficult to prove that an offense was gang related and consequently that the statute applies to a particular case. Second, the statute may be so narrow in its scope, or the penalty so mild, that prosecutors believe it is not worth the extra effort. Third, some gang members (especially in some Asian gangs) are more secretive of their gang involvement, exhibit fewer external signs of gang membership, and are less likely than others to "roll over" on codefendants, making successful prosecution more difficult. Finally, criminal justice officials may oppose some types of antigang legislation whose use affects charging and sentencing decisions. Under these conditions, one would expect little change in prosecution, adjudication, and sentencing practices after the implementation of particular antigang statutes.

Previous research on sentencing reform (see Miethe and Moore 1988, 1987; Blumstein et al. 1983; Martin 1983) suggests several hypotheses about the nature and consequences of opposition to antigang legislation. First, the greater the level of support from prosecution and judges for particular types of antigang legislation, the more frequently it will be used. However, the complexity of proving that an offense was gang related or involved gang participation under some State codes may be sufficient to discourage many prosecutors from filing these charges even if they generally support this legislation. Similarly, judges may resist efforts to use particular antigang statutes because such legislation may have mandatory provisions thought to usurp their discretion. Second, use of antigang statutes is likely to change as officials adapt to these external changes. For example, as prosecutors become more accustomed to applying these statutes, they may be more likely to use them in plea bargaining and sentencing decisions. Alternatively, it is possible that antigang statutes will be less frequently used over time because public defenders and judges who oppose these efforts have developed strategies to nullify elements necessary for successful prosecution.

The Historical Context of Nevada's Antigang Legislation

Throughout the late 1980s, Nevada experienced an alarming growth in gangs, gang members, and gang-related crime. By 1990, 6,000 active gang members in some 60 street gangs were estimated for Clark County alone (Lucherini 1991). That same year, criminal activity included 95 reported driveby shootings, 13 gang-related murders, and more than 1,100 felony arrests by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Gang Unit. During this period, Reno was first experiencing gang violence. In both jurisdictions, skepticism was growing about the adequacy of the Nevada criminal codes to deal with gang-related crime. Although local law enforcement had made arresting local gang members under the State's RICO statute a priority, early prosecutorial efforts to obtain convictions in court were a miserable and much-publicized failure (*Las Vegas Review-Journal* 1991).

In response to rising public fears about the gang problem and the perceived ineffectiveness of Nevada's statutes, State lawmakers enacted seven statutes between 1989 and 1991 in the war against gangs. These statutes addressed the following:

- Possessing a dangerous weapon on school property or in a vehicle at school.
- Discharging a firearm out of a motor vehicle.
- Aiming a firearm at a human being or discharging a weapon where a person might be endangered.
- Imposing an additional penalty for the procurement or solicitation of a minor to commit certain violations as an agent.
- Establishing additional penalties for committing certain violations at or near schools, school bus stops, or recreational facilities for minors.
- Creating penalties for felonies committed on a school bus.
- Doubling the penalty for felonies committed to promote activities of a criminal gang (referred to as the "gang sentencing enhancement statute," or SB230).

In often heated Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on SB230, considered the most far-reaching of Nevada's antigang bills, elected officials, the ACLU, and private citizens voiced their concerns. These individuals questioned the definition of a "gang," methods of identifying gang members, the mandatory nature of the additional penalties, rights, and the "inevitable" discriminatory application of the law if passed. Nonetheless, after a series of revisions (that many argued diluted the bill), SB230 passed through the committee, reached a majority vote in the Senate, and was signed into law by Governor Bob Miller on June 20, 1991. The other six antigang statutes in Nevada were passed with less political opposition.

The gang sentencing enhancement statute, Nevada Revised Statute 193.168, is in many ways similar to antigang measures enacted in other States. Like other statutes, it provides a definition of a criminal gang (derived from Nevada's own RICO statute),[1] stipulates how membership of a criminal defendant in a street gang must be established ("expert testimony"), and prescribes the penalty for conviction for a gang-related crime ("equal to and in addition to the term of imprisonment prescribed by the statute for the primary crime").

When compared to other States' gang legislation, however, the Nevada gang sentencing enhancement statute differs in at least three ways. First, unlike statutes in many other jurisdictions (see ILJ 1994), the Nevada statute covers all felonies. Thus, it is more inclusive than antigang laws enacted in Georgia, Louisiana, Iowa, and several other States. California's Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act, for example, targets only seven violent and drug-related offenses for gang prosecution. Second, the additional penalties provided by this Nevada statute are mandatory, with a limited exception for rendering substantial assistance to law enforcement for apprehending codefendants. Judges in Nevada retain far less discretion in imposing sentence enhancements than judges in other States (e.g., Georgia and Louisiana). Third, Nevada's statute is distinguished from other States' statutes by its severity. The gang sentencing enhancement statute doubles the term of imprisonment to be served by a gang member, and that additional term must run consecutively. By contrast, in California, which admits to having the "worst gang problem in the country" (Reiner 1992), the additional penalty for gang-related offenses is a maximum of 3 years. In Louisiana, the enhanced penalty is at most half of the maximum term for the primary offense (ILJ 1994). These three differences make Nevada's statute particularly attractive for prosecutors in charging and sentencing practices.

Gang Prosecution Units in Clark and Washoe Counties

The gang prosecution units in Clark (Las Vegas) and Washoe (Reno) Counties vary greatly in structure and scope. These differences in the organizational structure and community context provide an ideal basis for comparing the effectiveness of different types of gang prosecution units.

The Clark County District Attorney's Office established a gang prosecution unit in the fall of 1991 in response to escalating gang violence and gang activity. Funded by the county at an annual budget of $340,000, the unit consists of three full-time deputy district attorneys who deal with all gang-related cases in Las Vegas. The unit screened more than 1,000 felony complaints involving gang members in 1994 and has prosecuted more than 600 gang-related felony cases. Because of strong collaboration with Federal law enforcement authorities on drug cases (through the Southern Nevada Gang Task Force), the unit prosecutes fewer drug-related crimes involving gang members than do most other jurisdictions (see ILJ 1994). It instead deals mostly with gang violence cases (e.g., attempted murders, robbery, and weapon possession) and relatively fewer property crimes and drug offenses.

As is true of special units in other jurisdictions, the ultimate goals of the Clark County Gang Prosecution Unit are to reduce the level of gang violence in the community and to enhance communication among law enforcement agencies (Federal, State, county, and school police), prosecutors' offices, community-based organizations, probation departments, schools, community leaders, and family members of gangs and potential gang members (see Lucherini 1991). This prosecution unit attempts to achieve these goals by—

- Developing a computerized gang offender-based tracking system to monitor gang activity.
- Improving operational effectiveness of gang prosecution through vertical prosecution.
- Using a "team approach" to improve interagency coordination of gang intelligence and facilitate multijurisdictional investigations.
- Monitoring parole and probation for gang members to facilitate revocations for offenders who continue to participate in gang-related activities.
- Developing a gang hotline through the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department to increase gang intelligence and contact with victims and witnesses of gang activity.
- Creating a victim/witness protection program that offers physical security against potential threats and violence by gang members.

Before the Clark County Gang Prosecution Unit was created, gang cases were processed by regular prosecutors in different units within the District Attorney's Office (e.g., "major crime" unit, juvenile, repeat offender, and economic violators).

The gang prosecution unit uses both a proactive and reactive approach to increase gang intelligence and investigation. It works closely with the Special Enforcement Detail of the Las Vegas Police Department to compile information on currently active gang members and associates in the community. The gang prosecution staff meet regularly with this police unit to discuss use of particular informants, constitutional issues, and victim/witness support resources.

Washoe County had no separate gang prosecution unit until the Dangerous Youth Offender (DYO) specialized prosecution team was created and became fully operational in July 1993. The DYO unit is not exclusively a gang unit, as it deals with all youth (gang and nongang) who are considered a threat to the community because of the seriousness of their crimes, their history of repeat offenses, or their use of a weapon to commit their crimes. However, the unit rapidly became a specialized gang unit after the number of gang-related offenses in Reno rose from 77 to 193 in the last 6 months of 1994. Deputy district attorneys assigned to the unit also work on nongang and adult cases.

The dual goals of the DYO unit are to rigorously prosecute the minority of gang members who commit serious crimes and provide community alternatives for at-risk youths who are just marginally involved in gang activity. It has endorsed a variety of rigorous prosecutorial practices, including withholding plea bargaining to reduced charges, opposing pretrial release for DYOs, seeking maximum sentences, and publicizing convictions and sentences of gang members in schools and neighborhoods where other gang members congregate. Its commitment to providing alternatives to violence is evident in the strong working relationship it has created with the Northern Nevada Youth Gang Task Force, the Reno police force Community Action Team (CAT), and the Washoe County School District to change the social conditions that have promoted gang activity in the first place.

Differences and Similarities

The DYO unit resembles and differs from the Clark County Gang Prosecution Unit in several ways. Both units use vertical prosecution, apply a "team approach" that highlights multiagency collaboration, are relatively small, and strongly endorse rigorous prosecution of violent and habitual youth offenders. Key differences, however, include the following:

- Gang problems are far more pervasive in Clark County than in Washoe County.
- The caseload for gang prosecutors is greater in Clark County.
- Clark County prosecutors have greater experience with gang cases and specialize in gang cases, whereas DYO staff work with all types of youth offenses.

- Gang cases processed in Clark County are generally more serious (involving a higher concentration of violent crimes) than in Washoe County
- Washoe County's DYO unit uses a more community-oriented response to gangs (based on Reno's longstanding tradition of innovative programs for community and problem-oriented policing), in contrast to Clark County's more legalistic, law-and-order approach.

By comparing initial charging and sentencing practices before and after the gang prosecution unit of each county was created, it was possible to assess the impact of changes in organizational and community conditions on the successful prosecution of gang cases.

Comparison of these two counties with other jurisdictions in the United States (see ILJ 1994) makes it evident that the nature of gang problems and the characteristics of the gang prosecution units in Clark and Washoe Counties make them ideal case studies for national extrapolations. Clark County in the early 1990s resembled the average U.S. county with a population greater than 250,000 in the following ways:

- The number of gang-related homicides and other violent crimes prosecuted.
- Use of vertical prosecution (the approach used by 30 percent of large counties).
- Establishment of a separate gang prosecution unit (as with 30 percent of large counties).
- Issuance of juvenile waivers to adult courts in some gang cases (as done by the majority of jurisdictions).
- Use of alternative statutes (such as conspiracy and racketeering laws) in prosecuting gang cases.

The DYO unit in Washoe County also employs many of these prosecutorial practices, but Reno is more representative of cities of its size (60,000 to 100,000) in its emerging gang problem. Thus, the analysis of initial charging, adjudication, and sentencing decisions in gang-related cases in Clark and Washoe Counties has direct implications for improving understanding of how best to prosecute these cases in other jurisdictions.

Evaluation Results

Although gang prosecution units and antigang legislation have emerged nationwide in response to growing gang activity, the effectiveness of these responses in reducing rates of case dismissal, promoting victim/witness cooperation in gang cases, increasing conviction rates, and enhancing imprisonment rates has not been systematically evaluated (see ILJ 1994; Dahmann 1983). Much of what is currently known about gang prosecution and gang activity is based on studies in the largest U.S. cities, Los Angeles and Chicago. Unfortunately, such studies may have little relevance to increasing understanding of gang prosecution in smaller jurisdictions with less serious gang problems and fewer resources to combat these problems. This study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of antigang legislation and gang prosecution units in two medium-sized cities in Nevada.

Three types of data were collected and analyzed: (1) arrest reports, prosecutorial case files, and court records for gang and nongang cases; (2) field observations of working relationships between police and prosecution gang units, pretrial conferences, and criminal trials involving gang members; and (3) interviews with police officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges to elicit their opinions of the effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages of the antigang statutes and gang prosecution practices in Nevada's urban counties.

The Extent of Gang Crime in Las Vegas and Reno

Widespread claims by police and legislators in local media that gang crime is epidemic in Las Vegas are inconsistent with court and prosecution data from 1989 to 1995. In only about 6 percent of all charges filed for violent crime was the defendant a known gang member; this percentage was fairly stable over time. And contrary to media reports that gangs were controlling drug trafficking, only about 5 percent of all charges for drug trafficking in Las Vegas were filed against gang members. However, media and police reports of widespread gang crime in Las Vegas and, to a lesser extent, Reno, were pivotal in enactment of the antigang legislation and increases in the organizational resources for the local police and prosecution. Gang crime was clearly less prevalent in Reno, but high-profile instances of gang crime and their perceived threat to the community were also used in this jurisdiction to justify enactment of antigang legislation and the establishment of gang units. Law enforcement officials' legislative testimony was the basis for proclaiming the antigang statutes an important crime control strategy for combating gangs in Nevada.

The Frequency of Use of Antigang Legislation

The most frequent charges in both counties under the antigang statutes (exhibits 1 and 2) are for random and reckless use of firearms. In Clark County, between 1989 and 1995, more than 1,700 charges were filed for aiming a firearm at a human being (see exhibit 1). Almost 200 charges were filed for driveby shootings, the quintessential gang crime, but many of these charges involved multiple counts against the same defendant in a shooting spree. During this period, 69 charges for possessing a dangerous weapon on school property were filed in this county. The gang sentencing enhancement statute, which mandates a prison sentence and doubles the length of confinement, was charged 263 times in Clark County between 1991 and 1995. The statutes imposing additional penalties for specific offenses have not been applied in either county. Charges under the antigang statutes were far less

Exhibit 1: Number of Charges Filed (and Convictions*) in Clark County Under Antigang Legislation,† 1989–95

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Gang Sentencing Enhancement: Felony Committed to Promote Activities of Criminal Gang	—	—	0	1	84	117	61
(effective 9/1/91)	—	—	(0)	(1)	(9)	(8)	(19)
Possession of Dangerous Weapon on School Property or in Vehicle on School Property	0	0	0	7	27	15	20
(effective 10/1/89)				(2)	(1)	(0)	(3)
Discharging of Firearm out of Motor Vehicle	0	3	2	12	47	89	46
(effective 6/28/89)		(1)	(2)	(6)	(5)	(3)	(5)
Aiming Firearm at Human Being; Discharging Weapon Where Person Might Be Endangered	27	205	193	247	377	392	330
(effective 6/89)	(2)	(26)	(16)	(29)	(36)	(40)	(39)

* Numbers in parentheses denote convictions.

† No charges were filed under the laws that established additional penalties for procurement or solicitation of a minor to commit certain violations as one's agent; commission of certain violations at or near schools, school bus stops, or recreational facilities for minors; or committing a felony on a school bus.

Exhibit 2: Number of Charges Filed (and Convictions*) in Washoe County Under Antigang Legislation,† 1989–95

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Gang Sentencing Enhancement: Felony Committed to Promote Activities of Criminal Gang (effective 9/1/91)	—	—	0	6	1	15	2
	—	—	(0)	(1)	(1)	(0)	(2)
Possession of Dangerous Weapon on School Property or in Vehicle on School Property (effective 10/1/89)	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
	—	—	—	—	(0)	—	—
Discharging of Firearm out of Motor Vehicle (effective 6/28/89)	0	0	3	3	2	10	8
	—	—	(1)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
Aiming Firearm at Human Being; Discharging Weapon Where Person Might Be Endangered (effective 7/6/89)	0	0	0	1	5	1	3
	—	—	—	(0)	(2)	(0)	(1)

* Numbers in parentheses denote convictions.

† No charges were filed under the laws that established additional penalties for procurement or solicitation of a minor to commit certain violations as one's agent; commission of certain violations at or near schools, school bus stops, or recreational facilities for minors; or committing a felony on a school bus.

common in Washoe County. The gang sentencing enhancement statute, for example, was charged only 24 times in this jurisdiction from 1991 (the year it was enacted) through 1995 (see exhibit 2).

Although charges under specific antigang statutes are common in some cases, such as aiming a firearm, convictions for these charges are the exception. In Clark County, only about 10 percent of the charges for aiming a firearm at another person resulted in a conviction—similar to the conviction rates for driveby shootings. Conviction rates were about 9 percent for weapon offenses on school property and slightly higher (14 percent) for the gang sentencing enhancement statutes. In Washoe County, convictions for charges under the gang sentencing enhancement and driveby shooting statutes occurred in 17 percent and 4 percent of the cases, respectively.

Antigang legislation may be an important tool for prosecutors in plea bargaining negotiations. By requiring a prison sentence and a doubling of the prison term, the threat of conviction under the gang sentencing enhancement statute can be a powerful enticement for a guilty plea. Interviews with judges and deputy district attorneys provided anecdotal evidence of the importance of the gang sentencing enhancement statute in plea bargaining. Discussions in more informal meetings with prosecutors and defense attorneys further suggested that the threat of a gang sentencing enhancement conviction is often brought up in a subtle, less direct manner in these negotiations. However, no direct empirical evidence was found to support the assertion that the gang sentencing enhancement statute provided leverage during plea bargaining. No significant differences in conviction rates were discovered when gang cases processed before and after the statute's enactment were compared.

The Impact of Antigang Legislation on Other Felony Charges

Many States use existing criminal statutes to address gang crime rather than enact separate gang legislation. These include accessory, aiding and abetting, racketeering, habitual offender, harassment, and witness intimidation statutes. Even in States with antigang legislation, prosecutors' familiarity with existing criminal codes may predispose them to proceed with normal charging practices, avoiding the complexities and difficulties of some antigang statutes.

Analysis of court monitoring data before and after passage of the Nevada antigang statutes reveals no significant change in charging practices for other felony charges in gang cases. Charges for being an accessory, aiding and abetting, racketeering, harassment, witness intimidation, and habitual offending are rare in both Clark and Washoe Counties and have neither increased nor decreased since passage of antigang legislation. Thus, this legislation had no appreciable impact on other charges leveled against gang members in Nevada.

The Effectiveness of Gang Prosecution Units

As discussed, Clark and Washoe Counties each established gang prosecution units in response to reports of increasing gang activity. The Clark County Gang Prosecution Unit began operations in the fall of 1991 with three prosecutors and small caseloads. Washoe County's DYO unit was established in 1993, with five full-time attorneys, one investigator, and a secretary to manage caseloads. Vertical prosecution, whereby the same attorney follows a case through successive stages of criminal processing, was the approach for prosecution within each county's gang units.

To evaluate the effectiveness of gang prosecution units, conviction and sentencing practices for defendants processed in these units were compared with practice for defendants charged with similar offenses but processed in other track units. These "matched" samples were drawn in each county. Exhibit 3 summarizes differences in conviction and sentencing practices.

Although the number of convictions is similar across units, the likelihood of a conviction is higher in the gang unit than in track units in Clark County. Track units in Washoe County, however, have a higher conviction rate than does the DYO unit. For those convicted of any charge, a higher proportion of defendants in the gang units in both counties was given a prison sentence than were convicted offenders in the track units. Longer prison sentences were also given to defendants processed in the gang units.

Logistic regression analyses[2] were performed to determine whether differences between gang units and track units in conviction and sentencing decisions remained after controlling for other factors (e.g., prior record, age, and number of charges). These analyses revealed no statistically significant difference between gang units and track units in the likelihood of conviction and imprisonment upon conviction. This means that the observed differences in conviction and imprisonment practices between gang units and track units

Exhibit 3: Case Dispositions by Prosecution Unit in Clark and Washoe Counties

	Clark County		Washoe County	
	Gang Unit	Track Units	DYO* Unit	Track Units
Number of District Attorneys Involved During All Stages of Criminal Processing	3.8	3.6	1.4	1.2
Convicted of at Least One Offense (%)	98.7	82.4	80.5	92.5
Number of Convictions	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.1
Severity Score of Convicted Offense	3.9	4.3	4.5	3.5
Difference Between Arrest and Conviction Severity Scores	0.3	0.7	0.1	1.2
Received Prison Term (%)	54.1	46.5	57.1	55.1
Length of Prison Term (years)	8.3	7.1	4.9	3.5

* Dangerous youth offender.

are explained by differences in offender and case attributes across these units. Gang prosecution units do not enhance the success of criminal processing beyond that provided by other nongang prosecution units. A comparison of conviction rates for gang members before and after the implementation of gang prosecution units in Clark County also reveals no significant differences (59 percent versus 61 percent).

Changes in Gang Prosecution Units Over Time

External forces often influence the nature of criminal justice decision-making. In the current context, new district attorneys were elected in both Washoe and Clark Counties, starting their terms in 1995. In Washoe County, replacements and changes in the deputy district attorneys were the primary changes, whereas the new district attorney in Clark County substantially revised prosecution tracks. The former gang prosecution unit in Clark County was abolished in 1995 and merged with the Major Violators Unit. Under this revised structure, several of the most seasoned criminal attorneys are available to prosecute gang crimes, and one of the key prosecutors in the former gang unit was assigned to the Major Violators Unit.

Comparisons of court monitoring data before and after the changes in each gang unit revealed few differences. Charges for gang sentencing enhancement and driveby shootings had decreased in Clark and Washoe Counties in 1995, although conviction rates for gang sentencing enhancement were higher in both jurisdictions. These findings suggest that the gang sentencing enhancement statute is used less often and more effectively, resulting in higher conviction rates under the new administrations. Conviction rates for other charges involving gang members have remained fairly stable over time.

Attitudes of Criminal Justice Officials

Surveys were distributed to criminal justice officials in Clark and Washoe Counties to elicit their opinions and experiences with gangs, gang prosecution, and the antigang legislation. Respondents included 12 police officers in gang divisions, 19 deputy district attorneys, 28 public defenders, and 12 criminal court judges. Each group's attitudes about particular aspects of gang prosecution are summarized in exhibits 4 and 5.

When asked to evaluate the impact of Nevada's antigang legislation, most respondents favorably rated some aspects of these laws. The highest praise came from police gang officers and the lowest from public defenders. The majority of judges believed that the legislation was an effective tool, but prosecutors had mixed feelings. Most prosecutors believed that the gang sentencing enhancement statute was effective in addressing gang crime, but few believed that enhancements linked to school-related crimes, firearm forfeitures, or the use of a minor in criminal acts were reducing gang crime.

Except for public defenders, the vast majority of those surveyed viewed securing cooperation from victims and witnesses as a "major problem" in gang cases (see exhibit 5). The clear majority of gang and track district attorneys

Exhibit 4: Percentage of Criminal Justice Officials in Clark and Washoe Counties Reporting Nevada's Antigang Legislation Was Effective

	Police	Prosecutors	Defenders	Judges
Additional Penalties for Crimes Committed on School Bus (NRS 193.161)	57.1	16.6	26.9	4.5
Ban on Possessing Dangerous Weapon on Property or in School Bus (NRS 202.265)	72.7	66.6	67.9	91.7
Discharging Firearm out of Motor Vehicle (NRS 202.287)	91.7	57.9	46.4	75.0
Additional Penalties for Aiming Firearm at Human Being (NRS 202.290)	91.7	57.9	39.3	83.3
Firearm Forfeitures in Drug-Related Arrests (NRS 453.301)	83.3	26.3	25.0	41.7
Additional Penalties for Soliciting Minors to Commit Criminal Offenses (NRS 453.3343)	65.2	5.5	25.9	58.3
Additional Penalties for Crimes Committed Near School, School Bus Stop, or Recreational Facility (NRS 453.3345)	72.7	33.3	28.6	66.7
Doubling of the Penalty for Any Felony Committed to Further the Gang as a Criminal Enterprise (NRS 193.168)	91.7	57.9	33.3	83.3
State RICO Statute (NRS 207.360)	37.5	5.5	16.0	41.7

Exhibit 5: Problems in Prosecuting Gang Cases—Views of Criminal Justice Officials in Clark and Washoe Counties, in Percent

	Gang D.A.s	Track D.A.s	Public Defenders	Judges	Police
Obtaining the Cooperation of Victims/Witnesses					
Not a problem/minor problem	0.0	0.0	27.6	33.3	8.3
Moderate problem	12.5	9.1	44.8	16.7	37.5
Major problem	87.5	90.9	27.6	50.0	54.2
Victim/Witness Credibility					
Not a problem/minor problem	12.5	9.1	10.3	25.0	25.0
Moderate problem	12.5	27.3	41.1	50.0	50.0
Major problem	75.0	63.6	48.3	25.0	25.0
Victim/Witness Intimidation					
Not a problem/minor problem	0.0	0.0	48.2	33.3	13.0
Moderate problem	37.5	45.5	34.5	41.7	39.1
Major problem	62.5	54.5	17.2	25.0	47.8
Heavy Caseloads					
Not a problem/minor problem	47.5	40.0	39.3	25.0	43.5
Moderate problem	62.5	20.0	32.1	41.7	30.4
Major problem	0.0	40.0	28.6	33.3	26.1
Inadequate Police Preparation of Crime Reports					
Not a problem/minor problem	87.5	40.0	51.7	66.6	87.0
Moderate problem	12.5	60.0	37.9	16.7	8.7
Major problem	0.0	0.0	10.3	16.7	4.3
Difficult Proof Requirement to Show That the Offense Was Committed to Further the Gang					
Not a problem/minor problem	25.0	11.1	48.1	25.0	30.4
Moderate problem	62.5	44.4	29.6	50.0	34.8
Major problem	15.5	44.4	22.2	25.0	34.8

also reported victim/witness credibility as a major problem. Most prosecutors, judges, and police in the sample believed that the proof requirement for demonstrating that an offense was committed to further a criminal gang was at least a moderate problem in prosecuting gang cases.

Conclusions and Implications

By all indications, gang activity in large metropolitan areas has become a major social problem. Driveby shootings, carjackings, drug trafficking, and other predatory offenses by active gang members and their associates are common occurrences in urban areas. Although social programs have been implemented to reduce youths' risks and enhance their resistance to the pressures of gang participation, the primary response of the criminal justice community has been to increase the severity and certainty of punishment for gang-related offending. In Nevada and its major cities, Las Vegas and Reno, the twin goals of severe and certain punishment are promoted through enactment of antigang statutes in the criminal code and creation of specialized gang prosecution units to increase the conviction rate for gang-related offenses.

Even though national surveys of the prevalence of gang prosecution units have been conducted and the largest U.S. cities often provide annual summaries and internal reports about the operation of their gang units (see Genelin 1994; ILJ 1994; Reiner 1992), scant attention has been paid to process evaluations of the onset of antigang legislation and impact evaluations of the effectiveness of antigang statutes and gang prosecution units. In fact, no comprehensive research has been conducted on the social, political, and economic obstacles to enactment of antigang legislation and how competing interests influence the structure and scope of the final statutes.[3] The frequency with which these statutes are used in criminal court decisionmaking and the effectiveness of gang prosecution units in smaller jurisdictions also have not been addressed in previous research. This being the case, the results of the current study constitute an empirical benchmark that fills a major void in the understanding of the prosecution of gang cases.

The results indicate that some antigang statutes are widely used (especially those that address aiming firearms) whereas others, such as provisions against driveby shootings and gang sentencing enhancement, are less commonly employed. Once adjustments are made for different offender and case attributes, gang prosecution units in Clark and Washoe Counties yield conviction and incarceration rates comparable to those for defendants processed in other prosecution tracks. The results of this study have several implications for other jurisdictions that have or are considering establishing antigang legislation and gang prosecution units.

First, antigang legislation in Nevada was enacted with little social and political opposition. The passage of such legislation in other States would probably follow a similar path. Media coverage of gang crime and specific instances of brutal and random attacks on citizens provide a strong background for the mobilization of antigang control measures.

Second, criminal justice officials have used claims of escalating gang crime to increase their organizational resources. This was especially true of the police and prosecution in Clark County. Calls for increased resources were answered, even though there was no evidence from court data in this jurisdiction that gang crime had increased over time. If the experiences of Nevada are representative of other States, local media coverage of gang crime will play a major role in the development and support of antigang legislation and gang prosecution units in other jurisdictions.

Third, antigang legislation provides district attorneys with additional leverage in prosecuting gang members. Although most charges under the antigang statutes in Nevada do not result in a conviction under the specific statute, the threat of conviction under the gang enhancement statute may serve as a major enticement for a guilty plea on other charges. Most jurisdictions across the country have not used antigang legislation, relying instead on existing statutes for criminal prosecution. However, other States may benefit from the implementation and selective use of a gang sentencing enhancement statute similar to Nevada's, which doubles the penalty for gang crime, because it mandates a largely nondiscretionary prison sentence for these offenders.

Finally, specialized gang prosecution units are an important arena for processing and adjudicating gang cases. Whether other jurisdictions should establish such specialized units, however, depends on the gravity of the gang problem and specific expertise of the district attorneys. Rather than establishing a separate unit, designating one deputy district attorney as the "gang prosecutor" may be sufficient for smaller jurisdictions in addressing gang crime, especially if that person has had hands-on training in prosecuting gang members. Although external changes in the structure and composition of gang prosecution units may pose a serious threat to their effectiveness, this problem was minimized in Nevada by making a special effort to retain the most qualified gang prosecutors in spite of this changing political environment.

Notes

1. Under the Nevada Revised Statutes (193.168, Section 6), a "criminal gang" is defined as any combination of persons, organized formally or informally, so constructed that the organization will continue its operation even if individual members enter or leave the organization, which (a) has a common name or identifying symbol; (b) has particular conduct, status, and customs indicative of it; and (c) has as one of its common activities engaging in criminal activity punishable as a felony, other than the conduct that constitutes the primary offense.

2. Logistic regression is a statistical technique used to assess the relative importance of selected variables and whether the impact of a particular variable remains significant after considering its relationship with other variables in the model. A type of multiple regression, logistic regression is used primarily when the outcome variable (like conviction or acquittal) has only two values.

3. The political and economic nature of the antigang legislation in Nevada is addressed at length in the final report for this study (NIJ grant 94–IJ–CX–0053).

References

Blumstein, Alfred, Jacqueline Cohen, Susan E. Martin, and Michael Tonry, eds. 1983. *Research on Sentencing: The Search for Reform.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Conly, Catherine H. 1993. *Street Gangs: Current Knowledge and Strategies.* Issues and Practices. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. NCJ 143290.

Curry, G. David et al. 1994. *Update on Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping: Report of the 1994 NIJ Extended National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources: Final Report,* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 161476.

Dahmann, Judith S. 1983. *Prosecutorial Response to Violent Gang Criminality: An Evaluation of Operation Hardcore.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. NCJ 91553.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Daley, Richard M. 1985. *Gang Prevention Unit Report.* Chicago: Cook County State Attorney's Office.

Genelin, Michael. 1994. "Inter-Office Memorandum on the Operation of Hardcore Gang Division." Los Angeles, CA. Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

Institute of Law and Justice. 1994. "Gang Prosecution in the United States." Draft of Final Report Submitted to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC.

Klein, Malcolm W., Margaret A. Gordon, and Cheryl L. Maxson. 1987. "Police Response to Street Gang Violence: Improving the Investigative Process." Final Report Submitted to the National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC.

Las Vegas Review-Journal. 1991. "Judge Drops Racketeering Indictments." March 29, 1991.

Lucherini, Robert. 1991. "District Attorney Gang Unit Proposal." Proposal Submitted to Clark County Board of County Commissioners. September 12, 1991.

Martin, Susan. 1983. "The Politics of Sentencing Reform: Sentencing Guidelines in Pennsylvania and Minnesota." In *Research on Sentencing: The Search for Reform*, ed. A. Blumstein, et al. Washington, DC: National Academy Press: 265–304

Maxson, Cheryl L., Malcolm W. Klein, and Margaret A. Gordon. 1987. "Gangs in Smaller Cities." Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the American Society of Criminology, Montreal, Canada.

McKinney, Kay A. 1988. *Juvenile Gangs: Crime and Drug Trafficking.* Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. September 1998.

Miethe, Terance D., and Charles A. Moore. 1987. *Evaluation of Minnesota's Felony Sentencing Guidelines.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. NCJ 107743.

———. 1988. "Officials' Reactions to Sentencing Guidelines." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 25 (May): 170–187.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 1993. *Arrests of Youth*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Reiner, Ira. 1992. *Gangs, Crime and Violence in Los Angeles: Findings and Proposals from the District Attorney's Office*. Fairfax, VA: National Youth Gang Information Center.

Spergel, Irving A. 1990. "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change." In *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Vol. 12, ed. Norval Morris and Michael Tonry. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 171–275.

———. 1992. *Youth Gangs: Problems and Response*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 145313.

Zatz, Marjorie S. 1985. "Los Cholos: Legal Processing of Chicano Gang Members." *Social Problems* 33(1): 13–30.

Chapter 7

Evaluation of a Task Force Approach to Gangs

Susan Pennell
Director, Criminal Justice Research Division
San Diego Association of Governments

Roni Melton
Research Analyst
Criminal Justice Research Division
San Diego Association of Governments

Acknowledgments

This project was supported by National Institute of Justice grant 91–DD–CX–0046 and by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Abstract

Jurisdictions United for Drug Gang Enforcement (JUDGE) is a multijurisdictional task force that has operated in San Diego County since 1988. Headed by the District Attorney's office, it also includes the police, probation officers, and deputy district attorneys working together to target known gang members involved in drug use and sales. The early focus was enforcing the conditions of probation and drug laws, using undercover tactics, intensive supervision, and vertical prosecution. This evaluation examined the first 2 years of program operation, comparing the period before and after implementation. The process evaluation concluded that JUDGE was implemented as designed and had selected appropriate targets and methods for ensuring offender accountability. The evaluation of JUDGE's impact concluded that, although more than 80 percent of the targets were rearrested, the number of arrestees declined and most arrests were for violations of probation conditions. The proportion of arrests involving drugs also declined substantially. JUDGE cost much more than traditional supervision, chiefly because of the expenses of vertical prosecution and keeping arrestees in custody. The absence of a control group, which necessitated the pre-post-study method, proved to be a major limitation of the evaluation. Another limitation was that the relatively harsh treatment of JUDGE youths may have been a function of age: As they grew older and their contacts with the police increased, arrestees were more harshly treated than when they were younger.

This chapter describes an evaluation of Jurisdictions Unified for Drug Gang Enforcement (JUDGE), a gang task force program established in San Diego County in 1988 with the support of Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Byrne program funds. An earlier report of this evaluation presented findings from the first 2 years of the program, described the JUDGE program as it existed in 1995, and offered recommendations for future consideration (Pennell, Melton, and Hoctor 1996). This chapter also includes information about the present (2000) state of the program, its evolution over time, and the lessons learned while conducting a retrospective evaluation.

Impetus for JUDGE in 1988

The upsurge of gangs and associated drug and criminal activity in the mid-1980s, coupled with reductions in available resources, has led an increasing number of States and local jurisdictions to develop multiagency task forces. The 1987 grant application for Byrne funding to create the JUDGE program identified more than 27 street gangs with more than 2,300 members, most of whom were Hispanic and black. That early grant application further stated that "the current situation of gang related narcotic control has created a wave of violence involving several drive-by shootings and homicides. Street gangs have begun to resemble modern organized crime operations in terms of sophistication and tactics." According to the second-year grant application, a task force was needed because "[t]he overall burden on the probation department (of increased gang and drug activity) has resulted in many juvenile gang and drug offenders going back on the streets and engaging in narcotics activity without any real fear of supervision or accountability. It is difficult at best for these probation officers to follow-up the conditions of probation on a consistent basis" (Second Year Grant Application, San Diego County District Attorney's Office).

Sponsored by the BJA through the Anti-Drug Abuse Act as a Byrne-funded task force, JUDGE has been in operation since 1988. Initially, the program staff included three deputy district attorneys, two senior probation officers, six police officers representing three agencies, one sergeant, and one investigative specialist. Early task force efforts, mandated by the State Office of Criminal Justice Planning (the Byrne grant program administrator), focused on coordinating the efforts of three agencies to strictly enforce probation conditions and drug laws for juvenile gang members with a drug history. Two populations were targeted: juvenile street gang members on probation for narcotics offenses and street gang members not yet on probation but known

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

to be involved in the use, sale, and distribution of narcotics. In the second year, the focus expanded to include selected adult gang members involved in drug dealing.

The JUDGE program adopted the criteria developed by the California Department of Justice to define gangs and gang members. To be considered a gang, a group had to meet all of the following criteria:

- Have a name and identifiable leadership.
- Claim a territory, turf, neighborhood, or criminal enterprise.
- Associate on a continuous or regular basis.
- Engage in delinquent or criminal behavior.

To be documented as a gang member, an individual had to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Admit gang membership.
- Have tattoos or wear or possess clothing or paraphernalia associated with a specific gang.
- Be observed participating in delinquent or criminal activity with known gang members.
- Be known to the police as having a close association with known gang members.
- Be identified by a reliable informant as a gang member.

Program Description

The JUDGE program has three primary components: vertical prosecution by the District Attorney's Office,[1] the Probation Department's narcotics task force, and special enforcement operations carried out by the police. Vertical prosecution had the following objectives:

- Reduce the average project caseload for prosecutors, compared with non-vertical felony prosecution units.
- When appropriate, resist the release of defendants from custody before the trial or hearing.

- Ensure that the most severe sentence possible is imposed on a convicted or adjudicated defendant.
- Reduce the average amount of time between the arrest and disposition of charges against a project defendant.
- Eliminate or reduce the use of plea bargaining in project cases.
- Increase the conviction and adjudication rate for project defendants.

The Probation Department's Narcotics Task Force had the following objectives:

- Supervise a caseload of 20 to 30 targeted probationers.
- Coordinate with law enforcement through requests for assistance with Fourth Amendment waiver searches[2] and meetings with task force members to identify probation violators and develop arrest strategies for drug offenders and probation violators.
- Assist local law enforcement in identifying and apprehending project probation violators.

Special enforcement operations had the following objectives:

- Increase the number of warrants, indictments, and arrests of individuals charged with drug offenses.
- Increase the number of case referrals and cases filed on individuals charged with drug offenses.
- Increase the use of informants in drug investigations.
- Train law enforcement personnel on topics related to enhanced operation of anti-drug-abuse projects.

As will be shown later in this chapter, the evaluation of the JUDGE program could not determine whether some of these objectives had been met. No specific or measurable performance targets had been set, such as increasing by a certain percentage. The lack of baseline data for some indicators also made it difficult to accurately assess the program's effectiveness.

Before examining the results of the evaluation, however, it is appropriate to briefly describe the local and national context in which JUDGE was implemented.

The Context

One year before the JUDGE program was established in 1988, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD), the largest of San Diego County's 10 police agencies, created a specialized gang detail to focus on identifying and investigating known gang members and affiliates. The department began identifying crimes as gang related (if either the victim or the suspect were documented gang members), and its statistics showed that gang members were involved in significant numbers of assaults and homicides. One year after the JUDGE program was established, the San Diego Probation Department developed a specialized team, the Gang Suppression Unit (GSU), to increase supervision of gang members who were on probation. Like the JUDGE team, the GSU team (which supervised most of the JUDGE targets) was located in the Probation Department. Also, in the mid-1980s, the District Attorney created a Gang Prosecution Unit to specialize in the vertical prosecution of high-risk gang members. Each of these special units incorporated features common to such units, including extensive training for investigators about gang culture, undercover teams that conducted surveillance of gang members, greater use of informants, and exclusive focus on a particular type of offender.

Taking a multiagency approach to a crime problem was not a new idea in San Diego County. The Countywide Narcotics Task Force, representing all local police agencies, as well as State and Federal agents, had been in operation since 1955. In other areas of the country, multiagency task forces evolved, primarily in response to organized crime and then, in the mid-1980s, in response to the drug problem. The focus and purpose, the nature of the cooperation, and the types of agencies involved have all changed significantly over time (Chaiken et al. 1990). Studies have compared these task forces with traditional narcotics investigative units, investigated several multijurisdictional task forces in a single State, and examined task forces operating in conjunction with other law enforcement entities (Ruboy and Coldren 1992). Most of this research has been descriptive, with arrests, seizures, and convictions the primary measures of task force activities (Justice Research and Statistics Association 1993). A more recent study (Senese and Levinson 1994) involved surveys of probation and parole agencies that focused on gangs. The authors noted that strong programs usually—

- Have a lower than average client-to-agent ratio.
- Have a specialized gang unit.

- Monitor gang members' behavior.
- Prohibit gang members on probation from associating with other gang members.
- Emphasize a law enforcement, control approach, including intensive supervision.
- Ensure that all criminal justice entities cooperate and share information.

Earlier studies on task forces focused primarily on describing these activities and did not include a rigorous methodology for measuring their success. The JUDGE program incorporated all of these features, as well as others noted later in this chapter that are purported to contribute to the success of task-force efforts.

The JUDGE Program Evaluation

The researchers' original intent was to conduct both a process evaluation (to determine whether the project had been implemented as proposed) and an impact evaluation (to determine the effects of increasing accountability on reoffending) of the first 2 years of the JUDGE program (1988 and 1989). This evaluation did not take place as planned, however, and took longer than expected to complete. The final report, which came out in 1996, was a more qualitative, descriptive study than originally proposed and included an update on JUDGE activities in 1995.

The evaluation, which was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), began in 1991 and spanned a 3-year period. Since the evaluation began *after* program implementation, a true experimental design could not be initiated. Instead, researchers and program staff decided to use a quasi-experimental design, retrospectively selecting a control group of youths identified in SDPD and probation department files as gang members, to determine how the system responded to this group of gang members before the JUDGE program began and to compare their recidivism rate with that of youths targeted by the program. Unfortunately, however, this control group could not be identified for the following reasons:

- Criteria for defining gang members were not clearly defined before 1988.
- Some arrestees who seemed to fit the profile were never placed on probation.

- Some arrestees did not have a documented history of using or dealing drugs.
- Most important, many of the youth identified for the control group eventually became JUDGE targets.

It was therefore necessary to modify the original research design to include all 279 youths targeted by the JUDGE program in 1988 and 1989. Data were collected on these youths for the 2 years before the program was created and the 2 years after they had become targets. Thus, what was to be a rigorous impact evaluation became a descriptive, one-group, pre-post study of youths processed by the JUDGE program.

Data were compiled for every juvenile targeted by JUDGE during the first 2 years of the grant. Sources for data included arrest reports, probation reports, criminal history records, and court files. Generally, all source documents were incorporated in each individual's JUDGE file. Data elements included sociodemographic information, age at first arrest and true finding (complaint), types and levels of offenses, time in custody, drug test results, date of intake and release from JUDGE, sentences imposed, and recidivism up to 2 years after release. Additional data elements included gang affiliation, criminal history, offenses that resulted in probation, probation conditions, contacts by probation and JUDGE staff, and offenses committed during probation. For the process evaluation, outcome data were compared to project objectives to measure compliance (in terms of program implementation) and results (such as probation violations and drug test results). The consequences of increased probation supervision, including revocation, custody time, and use of vertical prosecution, were evaluated by comparing how cases were processed before and after JUDGE targeting.

In addition, to gauge the process and progress of JUDGE implementation, interviews were conducted with criminal justice personnel in the JUDGE program and the agencies that coordinated with JUDGE staff. Participants were asked to identify successful program elements, barriers to coordination, availability of resources, and training issues.

The analysis included a description of program implementation and operations and a comparison of how these youths were handled by the criminal justice system before and after JUDGE implementation. Exhibit 1 identifies the data elements and the sources for the data.

Exhibit 1: Data Elements and Sources, Case Tracking Form

Age, Sex, Ethnicity

Date of Birth

Education Level

Gang Affiliation

Instant Offense and Disposition

Status at Time of Arrest

Date of Sentence/Sentence Type

Prosecutor/Probation Office

Time in Custody

Probation Conditions

Drug Tests/Results

Probation Violations (Number and Type During Tracking Period)

Date of Intake/Release From JUDGE

Date Followup Period Ended

Number of Probation Contacts

Referrals to Other Agencies

Criminal History

- Age at first arrest
- Date of first probation referral
- First referral offense
- Date of first wardship
- Offense—first wardship
- Dates of arrest
- Highest arrest charges
- Drug charges
- Probation revocations/dates
- Dates of conviction
- Highest conviction charges
- Sentences
- Dates in custody/type of institution
- Dates on probation

Offenses During JUDGE

- Type of prosecution (vertical or nonvertical)
- Drug/felony/other arrests
- Convictions by type and level of charge
- Pretrial custody
- Revocations
- Types of sentences (e.g., maximum sentence imposed)

Sources: Arrest reports, JUDGE and probation department files, and court records

Research Objectives and Results

The study was designed to achieve the following:

- Determine if the JUDGE program objectives were met during the grant period.
- Assess the impact of such program activities as surveillance, special enforcement, and vertical prosecution on the expected outcomes: increased probation violations and arrests; more defendants held for pretrial custody; and more probation revocations, convictions, and sentences.
- Evaluate the program's impact on offenders as measured by recidivism rates, the need for probation intervention, and gang affiliation.
- Provide recommendations for similar programs in other jurisdictions.

Unfortunately, several research objectives could not be addressed systematically. The lack of a control group put the conclusions regarding the program's effectiveness into question. Documentation for several JUDGE activities was either unavailable or inadequate, including numbers relating to informants. One reason for the lack of sufficient data was the turnover of program staff responsible for documentation. In addition, in the second year of the evaluation, the investigative focus of JUDGE expanded to include adult offenders who were not necessarily gang members or drug offenders. Research was limited to the first 2 years of the JUDGE program and included only youthful offenders targeted in 1988 and 1989.

Another limitation of the study is that the increase in law enforcement supervision over time could simply be the result of the natural maturation of a youthful population, rather than a direct effect of the JUDGE program. The juvenile justice system historically has treated younger juveniles less harshly with respect to formal processing. In San Diego, earlier studies have shown this to be the case (Pennell and Curtis 1983, 1988). Juveniles tend to have several contacts with police and probation before more formal action takes place, generally when they continue delinquent activity as they age. Therefore, if the JUDGE youths were in fact treated more severely *after* becoming JUDGE targets (and they were), this may be a result of the system reacting overall to several contacts rather than the result of specific actions taken by a special task force.

On a process level, the results suggested that the JUDGE staff targeted the intended offenders by using screening criteria to define gang members and drug involvement, intervened at the appropriate phases in system processing, and enforced probation conditions.

Offender Characteristics

Juveniles were identified as JUDGE targets if they met all of the following screening criteria:

- Youths with a drug history (arrests for possession, sale, or trafficking or other indication in the file).
- Wards of the court.
- Gang members.

More than half (56 percent) of the 279 JUDGE targets were 16 to 17 years old when targeted. Targets were nearly equally divided between blacks (45 percent) and Hispanics (52 percent) (see exhibit 2). According to the SDPD's gang unit, these figures correspond to the ethnic breakdown of gangs in San Diego in 1988 and 1989.

All program targets were documented gang members (see exhibit 3). The vast majority of them were involved with drugs: 73 percent had been convicted of a drug offense, and 23 percent had an arrest for a drug violation. Only 3 percent had no indication of drug use or sales in their files. The most frequent charge of first referral to probation was a felony-level property offense. Slightly more than half of the youths (55 percent) were targeted during the prosecution stage and almost a quarter (23 percent) were targeted when on probation. At the time they were targeted by the JUDGE unit, 89 percent of the juveniles were wards of the court. Given the composition of the targeted group, youthful gang members involved with drugs with a criminal history, the JUDGE program followed the guidelines outlined in its grant proposal.

Exhibit 2: Demographic Characteristics of JUDGE Targets, 1988–89

Characteristics	Number (*N* = 279)	Percent
Age		
≤13	9	3
14–15	113	41
16–17	156	56
≥18	1	<1
Sex		
Male	273	98
Female	6	2
Ethnicity		
White	3	1
Hispanic	146	52
Black	125	45
Other	5	2

Exhibit 3: JUDGE Screening Criteria, 1988–89

Criteria	Number (*N* = 279)	Percent
Gang Member?		
Yes	279	100
Drug History		
Convicted of drug offense	204	73
Arrested for drug offense	63	23
Indication of drug use in file	4	1
No history	8	3
Ward of Court?		
Yes	247	89
No	32	11

Police Objectives

Police responsibilities in the JUDGE program included special enforcement (including undercover efforts), identification of gang members, and surveillance, as well as maintaining profiles of suspects in the regional computer.

All youths targeted by JUDGE in 1988 and 1989 were documented gang members. Before targeting, 52 percent of them had been placed in custody at time of arrest (see exhibit 4). After targeting, the proportion rose to 68 percent, consistent with JUDGE objectives. Two years before targeting, half of the arrests for those subsequently to become JUDGE targets were for a felony and 7 percent were for violating probation. Two years after targeting, only 30 percent of the arrests were on felony charges, while 32 percent were for probation violations, suggesting increased surveillance and more intensive supervision. Before the youths were JUDGE targets, 61 percent had a petition (complaint) requested, compared to 81 percent for the 2 years after being targeted.

Prosecution Efforts

To determine whether prosecution under the JUDGE program had achieved its objectives, proportionate filing rates, conviction rates, plea bargains, cases with vertical prosecution, custody prior to disposition, sentence, and average time from arrest to disposition were compared for cases involving

Exhibit 4: Law Enforcement Efforts Before and After JUDGE Targeting

	Before Targeting		After Targeting	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Highest Arrest* Charge				
Felony	546	50	254	30
Misdemeanor	393	36	270	32
Probation violations	75	7	271	32
Other	84	8	46	5
Law Enforcement Disposition				
Released	16	1	4	<1
Turned over	2	<1	0	0
Petition requested	673	61	673	80
Counseled and closed	46	4	4	0
Informal probation	76	7	4	0
Referred to probation/no action taken	233	21	145	17
Handled informally by police department	50	5	6	1
Highest Charge Filed				
Felony	392	58	201	30
Misdemeanor	212	32	209	31
Probation violations	64	10	246	37
Other	4	1	17	3
Custody at Arrest				
Yes	550	52	564	68
No	470	44	149	18
In custody at arrest	41	4	114	14

Note: Two years before and after JUDGE targeting.
* Refers to numbers of arrests, not individuals.

youths before and after targeting. These data were evaluated by case, not by individual; the results are shown in exhibit 5.

Before JUDGE targeting, the 279 juveniles had a total of 1,098 arrests. In the 2 years following, the 279 youths had been arrested 841 times (a 23-percent drop), perhaps related to time spent in custody and fewer opportunities to reoffend. After targeting, 80 percent of the arrests resulted in petitions filed with the court, compared with 61 percent of arrests filed before targeting, suggesting a more severe approach (see exhibit 5). In addition, 49 percent of the cases during the targeting period were prosecuted vertically, as opposed to 15 percent of the cases before JUDGE was implemented. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of cases involving JUDGE targets led to conviction, compared with less than half (44 percent) before the program was implemented. Cases processed by JUDGE were more likely to result in sentences involving custody. About a third (33 percent) of the cases in the JUDGE period were sentenced to local custody, compared with 16 percent of the pre-JUDGE cases. About 7 percent of the JUDGE cases resulted in sentences to the California Youth Authority (CYA), whereas only 1 percent of the cases

Exhibit 5: Prosecution Efforts Before and After JUDGE Targeting, in Percent

	Before Targeting (*N* = 841)	After Targeting (*N* = 1,098)
Petitions Filed	61	80
Vertical Prosecution	15	49
Plea Bargain	11	10
Enhancements		
Filed	1	1
Sustained	<1	1
Disposition		
Convicted	44	68
Other*	2	3
Sentence†		
Prison	0	1
California Youth Authority	1	7
Local custody‡	16	33
Probation§	5	5
Other**	16	15
In Custody Before Disposition††	27	49

Note: All numbers are based on total arrests.

* Includes dismissed, diverted, acquitted, and other dispositions.

† Percentages do not include those cases that were combined for sentencing.

‡ Includes Juvenile Hall, Juvenile Ranch Facility, 24-Hour School, and jail.

§ Includes cases that were given probation reinstated and modified.

** Includes sentences to out-of-State institutions, house arrest, work project, fines, restitution, halfway houses, and "other."

†† In custody before disposition but after detention hearing.

processed before JUDGE began resulted in this sentence. Time from arrest to disposition was shorter after JUDGE was implemented; 61 percent of the JUDGE cases were processed within 30 days, whereas only 47 percent of the pre-JUDGE cases were prosecuted that quickly.

These differences suggest that prosecution under the JUDGE program was indeed more severe than in the cases handled before the JUDGE unit was created and that prosecution goals were met. Generally, however, juveniles are processed more harshly as they penetrate further into the justice system, and this may have also contributed to these differences.

Custody Decisions

The JUDGE program sought to hold youths accountable for their behavior. One way to achieve this objective is to initiate graduated sanctions, such as placing people in custody at varying levels of processing, when responding to probation violations. A review of cases 2 years before and after JUDGE intervention revealed that youths were more likely to have been placed in custody after becoming JUDGE targets for similar sorts of offenses. As exhibit 6 shows, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of the post-JUDGE cases resulted in custody upon arrest, compared with 52 percent before the program was implemented. This pattern was consistent for several types of hearings. At disposition, 63 percent of the post-JUDGE cases involved placement in custody, in contrast with 47 percent of those processed before JUDGE. These proportionate increases following implementation of the JUDGE program may be the result of vertical prosecution, which is associated with a higher level of

Exhibit 6: Stage at Which JUDGE Targets Were Placed in Custody

	Before Targeting		After Targeting	
Stage	Number of Cases	Percent Resulting in Custody	Number of Cases	Percent Resulting in Custody
At Arrest	550	52	564	68
At Detention Hearing	369	72	439	75
At Readiness Hearing	300	46	415	67
At Jurisdictional Hearing	80	41	118	60
At Disposition Hearing	235	47	360	63

preparedness by the deputy district attorney, since the attorney follows the case from initial investigation to disposition.

Technical Violations

To keep offenders accountable, fairly strict probation conditions are ordered to monitor behavior more closely. Intensive supervision generally involves increased contact with defendants, which, in turn, increases the opportunities to observe unacceptable behavior that includes violating probation conditions. The data suggest that this was the case with the JUDGE targets. Before JUDGE, according to the first-year grant application, probation resources were limited and insufficient to respond to the increase in gang-related activity. By teaming with law enforcement, JUDGE probation officers were able to enhance their surveillance and supervision of identified youths.

When youths in San Diego County become delinquent wards of the juvenile court, the probation officer prepares a social study that describes the activities they have engaged in (drugs, gangs, truancy, etc.). The court has a "laundry list" of behavior or rules to which the youths may be mandated to adhere, such as attending school, obeying school rules and the rules of parents and guardians, not associating with gang members, or going to drug treatment. From the information compiled in the social study, including prior delinquent history, the probation officer makes recommendations to the court regarding which behavior or conditions should be mandated by the court. Before the JUDGE program was implemented, the probation department did not have the resources or time to devote to identifying appropriate conditions and following up with supervision. The following exhibits suggest that after being targeted by JUDGE, a higher proportion of youths had specific conditions ordered and were subsequently found to be in violation of these conditions.

As exhibit 7 illustrates, before becoming JUDGE targets, 12 to 39 percent of the study group had probation conditions ordered by the court that included no contact with illegal narcotics, following probation officers' rules, not associating with specific individuals, obeying school rules, submitting to Fourth Amendment waiver searches, observing curfew, not carrying or using weapons, and submitting to drug testing. After becoming JUDGE targets, 55 to 78 percent of the juveniles had such conditions ordered by the court. While a JUDGE target, 60 percent or more were found to be in violation of such probation conditions as not following rules, associating with specific

Exhibit 7: Probation Conditions Ordered Before and After JUDGE Targeting Evaluation Period, 1986–91

	Percent of JUDGE Targets	
Conditions Ordered	Before Targeting	After Targeting
Follow Probation Officer's Rules	39	78
Report All Law Enforcement Contacts	39	78
Follow Guardian Rules	39	78
Stay in County	39	78
Obey School Rules	39	77
Submit to Testing	28	75
Report in to Probation Officer	39	77
Not Associate With Others	19	75
No Weapons	16	55
No Alcohol	29	74
No Illegal Narcotics	29	76
Not in Vehicle With Other Juveniles	9	44
No Gang Clothes	18	75
Not in Certain Places	8	49
Curfew	12	67
Counseling	35	71
Fourth Amendment Waiver	33	76
Other	2	8

individuals, possessing narcotics, and violating curfew (see exhibit 8). Overall, nearly two-thirds of the JUDGE targets (66 percent) were arrested for probation violations after JUDGE intervention, compared with 17 percent before becoming a target (see exhibit 9).

Consistent with the features of intensive supervision, the individuals targeted by JUDGE and later supervised by the Gang Suppression Unit were frequently reported by their probation officers for violations (see exhibit 8). It is difficult to state with confidence whether they were reported because they were serious offenders and got into trouble frequently or because the increased supervision made it more likely that they would get caught. (Data are available for the 3-year period of JUDGE tracking of the study group with respect to conditions ordered and violated.) More than 50 percent of the JUDGE targets were reported for violating the following conditions:

Exhibit 8: Probation Conditions Ordered After JUDGE Target Date and Violated During Tracking Period, 1988–91

Probation Conditions	Percent Ordered	Percent Violated
Follow Probation Officer's Rules	78	64
Report All Law Enforcement Contacts	78	14
Follow Guardian Rules	78	9
Stay in County	78	2
Obey School Rules	77	53
Submit to Testing	75	4
Report in to Probation Officer	77	11
Not Associate With Others	75	60
No Weapons	55	42
No Alcohol	74	13
No Illegal Narcotics	76	99
Not in Vehicle With Other Juveniles	44	10
No Gang Clothes	75	33
Not in Certain Places	49	42
Curfew	67	69
Counseling	71	6
Submit to Fourth Amendment Waiver Searches	76	1

- Following probation officers' rules (64 percent).
- Obeying school rules (53 percent).
- Not associating with certain others (60 percent).
- No use or sales of illegal narcotics (99 percent).
- Curfew (69 percent).

Total Time in Custody

Offenders who are in custody have few or no opportunities to reoffend. The data show that JUDGE targets spent a considerable amount of time behind bars during their JUDGE tenure. More than 40 percent were in juvenile hall or some other local institution for a total of a year or more, although

Exhibit 9: Arrest History of JUDGE Targets Before and After Targeting

	2 Years Before Being Targeted (*N* = 279)		2 Years After Being Targeted (*N* = 279)	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total JUDGE Targets Arrested	279	100[*]	231	83[*]
Total Arrested for Violent Felonies	62	22[†]	62	27[†]
One arrest	47	76[‡]	51	82[‡]
More than one arrest	15	24[‡]	11	18[‡]
Total Arrested for Felony Drug Offenses	177	63[†]	65	28[†]
One arrest	133	75[‡]	52	80[‡]
More than one arrest	44	25[‡]	13	20[‡]
Total Arrested for Misdemeanor Drug Offenses	123	44[†]	68	29[†]
One arrest	77	63[‡]	49	72[‡]
More than one arrest	46	37[‡]	19	28[‡]
Total Arrested for Probation Violations	47	17[†]	152	66[†]
One arrest	32	68[‡]	74	49[‡]
More than one arrest	15	32[‡]	78	51[‡]
Mean Number of Arrests	3.9		3.0	
Total without probation violations	3.7		2.0	
Violent felony offenses	0.3		0.3	
Felony drug offenses	0.8		0.3	
Misdemeanor drug offenses	0.7		0.4	
Probation violations	0.3		1.0	

[*] Percentage of total number of JUDGE targets.
[†] Percentage of number of JUDGE targets arrested.
[‡] Percentage of those arrested in this category.

this was not necessarily consecutive time. Another 25 percent had 6 months to a year of custody time. Unfortunately, no records had been kept of their custody time before being targeted, so it is not certain if the time in custody was actually greater after targeting. Other indicators, however, such as differences in the number of technical violations, suggest that defendants probably spent more time in custody after JUDGE, since they were reported more often for violating probation conditions than before being targeted.

Recidivism

A typical measure of success in the criminal justice system is the recidivism rate, the frequency with which offenders return to the system via arrest. The measure has its limitations and is generally bolstered with other measures, such as reintegration into mainstream society through employment, school attendance, or reduction in drug use. Also, it is recognized that intensive supervision leads to more arrests due to increased surveillance. Unfortunately, since social integration information was not available for this study, analysis of recidivism was limited to considering the number and nature of arrests 2 years before and after JUDGE intervention.

Most of the 279 JUDGE targets (83 percent) were rearrested within 2 years after JUDGE intervention, but the mean number of arrests dropped slightly (3.9 to 3.0), perhaps because offenders were in custody part of the time (exhibit 9). Arrests for felony drug violations dropped to 28 percent of the total, compared to 63 percent before JUDGE was implemented. The proportion of arrests for violent felonies rose slightly, from 22 to 27 percent. As expected, most of the arrests after JUDGE targeting (66 percent versus 17 percent) were for probation violations. An arrest for a probation violation occurs when it becomes apparent that a youth is not complying with the conditions of his or her probation.

Analysis of the JUDGE program suggests that it was implemented as designed with respect to appropriate targets and methods for ensuring offender accountability such as complaints filed, custody time, vertical prosecution, conviction, and sentencing. Outcome measures suggest that although more than 80 percent of the JUDGE targets were rearrested, the ***number*** of arrests dropped, and most of these were for probation violations. Moreover, the proportion that involved drug violations declined substantially.

When researchers reexamined the JUDGE targets in 1995, 64 percent of the 279 had had new court cases filed, with an average of 3 cases per individual. These results suggested that many JUDGE targets remained involved in criminal activity and that the task force had appropriately focused on isolating a small segment of offenders who appear particularly crime-prone, monitoring their behavior closely, and applying sanctions swiftly and with certainty.

This finding is difficult to interpret because not enough is known about this group of offenders to determine whether they are particularly crime-prone or the extent to which an enforcement approach actually contributes to reoffending because it does not address other issues such as drug treatment, education, and employment. The current juvenile justice strategy in San Diego County employs both intervention and enforcement, based on the tenets of the comprehensive juvenile justice strategy developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, which incorporates risk factors along with offender accountability (Howell 1995). As discussed below, however, the JUDGE unit remains in operation.

After the Evaluation

Upon revisiting the JUDGE program in 1995, researchers learned that its mission had shifted direction periodically. After the 1994 three strikes legislation, for example, the JUDGE unit began targeting "second strikers" who could potentially commit a third offense that would result in prison time. The FY 1999–2000 grant application represents the 11th year of BJA Byrne funding. The JUDGE program's current focus is on adult criminal offenders who are on probation or parole and identified as habitual drug offenders (whether or not they are gang-affiliated), drug-involved documented juvenile gang members, and discretionary targets. The program still involves cooperation and teamwork between law enforcement, probation, and the District Attorney. Six of the 10 law enforcement agencies in San Diego County are represented, as well as the California State Parole Board, the California State Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, and the San Diego County Department of Social Services. Because of money constraints and local agency policy, the other four law enforcement agencies have elected not to participate in JUDGE.

Probation and parole officers conduct searches with police to identify probationers and parolees involved in gangs or drugs. Targeted offenders continue to be prosecuted vertically, and prosecutors accompany police officers in the field for observation and training and to serve as an immediate resource. Although the current emphasis is on adult offenders, juveniles are frequently targeted and arrested as part of ongoing investigations. According to its coordinator, JUDGE continues to report a conviction rate of more than 90 percent, with most of the juveniles committed to California Youth Authority and most adults sent to prison.

The FY 1999–2000 JUDGE grant application included each of the 12 critical elements that, according to a recent study (BJA 2000), have helped several multijurisdictional task forces achieve their programmatic and organizational objectives:

1. Written interagency agreement
2. Prosecutor involvement
3. Computerized information/intelligence databases and systems
4. Case planning and selection
5. Communication
6. Coordination
7. Budget planning
8. Dedicated and well-defined mission
9. Monitoring and evaluation
10. Staffing and recruitment policy
11. Effective asset seizure and forfeiture activities
12. Technical assistance and training.

In addition, the JUDGE program incorporates several of the practices documented in a 1998 study on "what works" to prevent crime (Sherman et al. 1998), although some of these practices—including monitoring of gang members, intensive supervision, and units that focus on repeat offenders—have had mixed results. The measure of success used by JUDGE today is "having a high proportion of investigations that result in criminal prosecutions and maximum incarceration time for targeted offenders." The effectiveness is determined by the project coordinator, who reports to the San Diego Police Chiefs' and Sheriff's Association.

Although both countywide FBI index crimes and gang crimes within the city of San Diego have declined over the past few years (Allnutt and Pennell 2000; San Diego Police Department Gang Unit 2000), it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how much of the decline can be attributed to the JUDGE unit's efforts, particularly in light of all the other efforts taking place. These include the U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Task Force, which focuses on gang violence and narcotics activity; the Probation Department's Gang Suppression Unit, which is still in operation; the SDPD's Gang Unit and Narcotics Division; the District Attorney's Office's Gang Prosecution Unit; and the North County Gang Task Force. The ultimate reason for JUDGE's continued longevity may have little to do with research-based documentation of effectiveness and more to do with the interests of the local criminal justice administrators in continuing an approach that allows the targets to change over time. As stated in a recent Bureau of Justice Assistance report, if task forces are to be successfully sustained, they must be able to integrate themselves into the existing criminal justice system and adapt to changes in their environment (Bureau of Justice Assistance 2000). Apparently, the JUDGE program has succeeded in this endeavor.

Lessons Learned

The experience of this study illustrates the problems in conducting a retrospective study of a program that shifted focus during the evaluation period. A number of issues were raised, including the availability, reliability, and validity of the data. Foremost in this regard was the issue of selecting a comparable group of subjects for a control group. Another factor that complicated the impact assessment was that probationers could be targeted at any time in the process, including before arrest. In addition, some process-level objectives, such as increasing surveillance hours and the use of informants, could not be assessed because the data were not maintained, and the existence of multiple data sources in numerous locations hampered the efficiency of the data collection effort.

The JUDGE assessment underscores the need for researchers and practitioners to begin at the program's outset by linking the program goals and activities with expected measures and outcomes and developing the indicators that will demonstrate the program's effectiveness. It also highlights the reality that programs are often implemented and maintained based on the interests of policymakers and administrators. The task force concept has great appeal to policymakers, as does the notion of accountability for offenders; both are assumed to be efficient and effective.

Notes

1. In vertical prosecution, the same prosecutor handles a case all the way from preliminary hearing to sentencing.
2. Convicted defendants can waive their Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure as a condition of probation.

References

Allnut, Donna, and Susan Pennell. 2000. *Crime in the San Diego Region: Mid-Year Report.* San Diego, CA: San Diego Association of Governments.

Bureau of Justice Assistance. 2000. *Creating a New Criminal Justice System for the 21st Century: Findings and Results From State and Local Program Evaluations.* Effective Programs Monograph No. 2. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCJ 178936.

Chaiken, Jan, Marcia Chaiken, and Clifford Karchmer. 1990. *Multijurisdictional Drug Law Enforcement Strategies: Reducing Supply and Demand.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 126658.

Howell, James C., ed. 1995. *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, NCJ 153681.

Institute for Law and Justice. 1992. "Gang Prosecution Prosecutor Survey." Draft prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC.

Justice Research and Statistics Association. 1993. *Multijurisdictional Drug Control Task Forces: A Five Year Review, 1988–1993.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCJ 146395.

Pennell, Susan, and Christine Curtis. 1983. *The Serious Juvenile Offender.* San Diego, CA: San Diego Association of Governments.

———. 1988. *Juvenile Violence and Gang-Related Crime.* San Diego, CA: San Diego Association of Governments.

Pennell, Susan, Roni Melton, and Darlanne Hoctor. 1996. *Assessment of a Multi-Agency Approach to Drug Involved Gang Members.* Program Evaluation. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 185252.

Ruboy, M.A., and J.R. Coldren, Jr. 1992. *Law Enforcement Task Force Evaluation Projects: Results and Findings in the States.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCJ 136697.

San Diego Police Department Gang Unit. 2000. Personal communication.

Senese, Jeffrey D., and Robert B. Levinson. 1994. "A National Assessment of Gangs on Probation and Parole: Control and Prevention of Gangs in Community Corrections." Paper presented at American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Miami, FL.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Denise Gottfredson, Doris L. MacKenzie, John Eck, Peter Reuter, and Shawn D. Bushway. 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, July, NCJ 171676.

Chapter 8

Gang Prevention Programs for Female Adolescents: An Evaluation

Katherine Williams, Ph.D.
Development Services Group, Inc.

G. David Curry, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology and
Criminal Justice, Department of Sociology
University of Missouri–St. Louis

Marcia I. Cohen
Vice President, Research and Evaluation
Development Services Group, Inc.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, under grant 93–IJ–CX–0051; and by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Abstract

Until the most recent wave of gang violence, research treated gang crime as almost exclusively a male phenomenon. Evidence indicates the number of female gang members is rising, and the unique features of female gang involvement reinforce the importance of prevention and intervention for females at risk. Gang involvement has been shown to have more long-term effects on females and more severe effects on their children, and crime victimization is greater among female gang members than among their male counterparts. This evaluation of youth gang and drug prevention and intervention for females focused on programs in Boston; Pueblo, Colorado; and Seattle. All three programs successfully provided a core mix of services, but the process evaluation revealed some inadequacies in monitoring, recordkeeping, and staff training. Staff turnover was high, and some difficulties were encountered in involving parents and recruiting and retaining participants. All three programs experienced problems with local evaluations. Because the impact evaluation was limited in Seattle and Boston by data collection problems, only the findings from Pueblo were reported. Pueblo was also the most successful in implementation, effectively reducing five of the seven types of delinquency measured. School performance was also measured. On entering the program, participants tended to earn lower school grades than nonparticipants and to have dropped out. After program completion, participants still earned lower grades, but the gap was no longer statistically significant. Yet the self-esteem of participants was no higher than that of nonparticipants as a result of the program. One key to Pueblo's success may have been the comprehensiveness of its services, which included project components that addressed key factors correlated with female gang involvement.

Youth and gang violence increased substantially in the United States from 1985 until the mid-1990s. With the rising statistics, national concern over gang-related crime increased (Huff 1990; National Institute of Justice 1992; Spergel 1990). In earlier periods of rising gang activity, research had treated gang-related crime as a solely male phenomenon. With the 1985–95 wave of gang violence and public response, however, research and program practice began to focus for the first time on the role of women in gangs (Campbell 1984; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Miller 2001; Miller and Decker 2001; Moore 1991).

Estimates of the level of female involvement in gangs vary with the sources of available data. Surveys of law enforcement agencies have consistently reported the contribution of female gang members to officially recorded crime to be comparatively low. More recent information on law enforcement assessment of gang problems has been provided by the annual surveys of the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) (1999). The 1998 NYGC survey of law enforcement agencies (NYGC 2000) estimated that there were about 62,420 female gang members nationwide (8 percent of the 780,233 estimated gang members). These results suggest that law enforcement reports of female gang members increased dramatically after 1991, when the estimated figure was 9,092 (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994). Surveys of at-risk youth in school populations have produced larger estimates of female involvement in gangs (Bjerregaard and Smith 1993; Esbensen and Huizinga 1993). The most recent and geographically comprehensive survey of youth by Esbensen and Winfree (1998) estimated that 38 percent of gang members were female. Field studies of female gang involvement may offer an explanation for the differences between law enforcement and survey estimates (Chesney-Lind, Sheldon, and Joe 1996; Fleisher 1998; Hagedorn and Devitt 1999; Moore 1991). Although female gang members tend to engage in criminal behavior more often than males who are not gang members (Esbensen, Deschenes, and Winfree 1999; Fagan 1990), they self-report involvement in less serious delinquency than male gang members. There is also evidence that females cease participating in gangs at an earlier age than males.

Though female gang involvement may contribute less to gang-related crime than does male involvement, it has unique features that make it worth studying. Moore (1991) emphasized that gang involvement has more long-term effects on the lives of female gang members and a more severe impact on the lives of their children (and, perhaps, consequently for the community and society) than it does on the lives of their male counterparts. Miller (2001;

also see her chapter in this volume) observed that female gang members experience higher levels of victimization as a result of their gang participation. Fleisher (1998) suggested that gang-affiliated females contribute to the social processes through which male members maintain group identity and cohesion. The complexity of female participation in gang activity and the potential for longer term negative consequences reinforce the importance of gang prevention and intervention programs targeted to females at risk for gang involvement.

Federal Government sensitivity to the issue of female gang involvement was demonstrated by the funding of seven female gang prevention programs by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 1990. Four more female gang prevention programs were funded by the same agency in 1992 as part of the Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program, but FYSB's focus on gang involvement as a program concern was phased out in the late 1990s. By 1995, the program's gang prevention and intervention components were discontinued. Today, few Federal demonstration programs address this population (Curry 1999b).

This report presents the findings from an evaluation of three federally sponsored youth gang and drug prevention and intervention projects designed specifically for females. The evaluation represents a joint commitment of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and FYSB, each of which contributed funds to support the effort. NIJ managed the evaluation. The study was conducted by Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), in Bethesda, Maryland, and G. David Curry of the University of Missouri–St. Louis. Dr. Curry was responsible for collecting and analyzing the outcome data for the study, and DSG staff were responsible for overall project management, process evaluation activities, and production of the final report.

Study Sites

The three evaluated projects were chosen from four sites operating programs for adolescent females funded by FYSB in 1992 as a part of the Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program described above. Program selection was based on geographic location, ethnicity of service population, differences in program focus, and the availability within each program of adolescent females never involved in gang activity and adolescent females either currently or previously involved in gang activity. Under FYSB guidelines, projects could serve both girls at risk of gang involvement and those who were already involved in gangs. (The fourth site, in Washington, D.C., was not selected because it did not serve gang-involved girls.) The projects had been funded for 3 years, beginning in 1992. Federal funding for each project was $150,000 per year, including small (less than $15,000) budgets for local evaluation activities that were separate from this evaluation. Each site also contributed in-kind resources. The projects are described briefly below.

FORCE (Females Obtaining Resources and Cultural Enrichment): The Next Level

One of several youth programs operated by the Community Initiatives Division of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) in Boston, Massachusetts, FORCE: The Next Level was a continuation of a project for girls living in public housing developments. The project had been established by Judge Baker's Children Center in cooperation with BHA. The original FORCE project was funded by FYSB in 1990 for 2 years. At the end of the second year, BHA applied for additional funding from FYSB to enrich the program by adding specialists in family support, leadership development, personal growth, and recreation and by starting support groups for girls in the program. FORCE: The Next Level was designed to expand the earlier program by including older girls, involving participants' families, and providing a range of gender- and culture-specific services matched to the developmental needs of urban, low-income females. The program offered recreational, personal growth, leadership, and support group services and was designed to serve 400 girls and their families in 6 BHA housing developments. The project primarily served black females, with the exception of one public housing development that had a majority of white residents.

Movimiento Ascendencia (Upward Movement)

This program was operated by the Pueblo Youth Services Bureau (PYSB) in Pueblo, Colorado, and served a primarily Mexican-American population. The project was one of a continuum of service programs provided by PYSB to youths in Pueblo and the surrounding county. It was established to provide young females with positive alternatives to substance abuse and gang involvement. (These programs included drug prevention programs, a youth center for runaways and the homeless, community-based services for youth involved with the juvenile justice system, a diversion program for first-time felony offenders, a restitution and community services program, and a transitional living program.) Movimiento Ascendencia was designed to serve 240 girls at risk of gang involvement and 120 gang-involved females and their families. Project activities were designed around three main components: mediation or conflict resolution, self-esteem or social support, and cultural awareness.

The Adolescent Female Gang Prevention and Intervention Project

An initiative of the Seattle Team for Youth in Seattle, Washington, this program was designed to address the needs of adjudicated and preadjudicated teenage females of color and to prevent or reduce their participation in local gangs. Project activities included substance abuse education and intervention services, mentoring, self-esteem building, positive ethnic and cultural identification, social skills training, and services addressing teen pregnancy, housing, parenting, and other issues related to being a teen parent. The Seattle Department of Housing and Human Services provided services via subcontracts with the Atlantic Street Center to provide case management and substance abuse awareness and education and, with Sisters in Common, to provide a 12-week support group-based curriculum in self-esteem and culturally relevant activities. The program was designed to provide 60 females with intensive case management services and 175 females with education and gang prevention programs.

All three programs served populations primarily composed of girls who are members of minority groups. Given the target populations of gang-involved and at-risk populations, this is not surprising. Before the 1960s, gangs were most often represented as primarily composed of young, white males and formed along ethnic lines. Thrasher, studying gangs in the 1920s (1963 [1927]: 130), estimated that only 7 percent of Chicago gangs consisted entirely of black members. Mexican-American gangs did not receive attention until the 1940s (Moore 1978). Since the 1970s, most field research, particularly research on females (Campbell 1984; Horowitz 1983; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Moore 1991), has focused on minority populations. While survey research on juvenile populations has generally shown a greater proportion of white youths self-reporting gang membership (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Esbensen and Winfree 1998), law enforcement data since the 1970s have consistently shown overrepresentation of minorities among police-identified gang members. For 1996, the NYGC (1999) survey reported gang membership in cities with populations greater than 25,000 to be 44 percent

Hispanic, 40 percent black, and 10 percent white. It has been argued (Curry 1999a) that law enforcement records and survey results show different ethnic composition of gangs because older and more criminally involved gang members are coming to the attention of law enforcement. It may have been these girls' greater difficulty in leaving gangs and greater involvement with criminal justice agencies that led the agencies applying for ACYF funding for female gang prevention and intervention to direct their services to minority youths.

Evaluation Method

The research design included both process and impact evaluation components. The study had the following objectives:

- Process evaluation objectives:
  - Describe the organization and implementation of three youth gang prevention and intervention projects designed specifically for black women and Latinas.
  - Describe the services and activities of these prevention and intervention projects and the females who participated in them.
  - Describe the implementation of the local evaluations.
- Impact evaluation objectives:
  - Describe background characteristics, family interactions, peer relationships, school involvement, delinquent activities, and gang and drug involvement for program participants and nonparticipants.
  - Examine each program's impact on participants.

The process evaluation addressed the design, implementation, operation, and community context of the three projects. Data collection was designed to provide information on a wide range of program-related variables from several perspectives. For each project, data sources included proposals and quarterly reports sent to FYSB, project-developed material, interviews with project staff and knowledgeable community leaders, and direct observation of project activities during site visits.

Each site was visited twice during the grant period by two senior DSG research staff members. The first series of visits, which took place between the 20th and 22nd months of project operation, focused on startup activities, community context, and activities. Because all three projects experienced significant startup problems, it was not necessary to conduct site visits earlier. The second series of visits took place between months 30 and 34 of project operation, and focused more intensively on intervention and prevention activities and on following up on issues raised during the first site visit.

The outcome part of the study was an interview-based survey of six groups of adolescent females: gang-involved, formerly gang-involved, and non-gang-involved program participants and nonparticipants. The study was designed to add to the existing literature on female gang participation by describing female participation in gang activity, exploring the extent to which program participants differed from nonparticipants on the key variables associated with the risk for gang involvement, and assessing the extent to which program participation resulted in positive outcomes.

Sample

Researchers hoped to recruit 30 gang-involved participants, 30 non-gang-involved participants, 30 gang-involved nonparticipants, and 30 non-gang-involved nonparticipants from each site, for a total of 360 subjects from the 3 sites. It was intended that program participants would be randomly selected from program rosters developed by program staff at each site. These initial plans had to be adjusted, however, and the result was three different sample selection procedures.

The Pueblo program files were available for sampling, and it was possible to select a random sample of participants. Nonparticipants were identified using snowball samples[1] developed through school and juvenile justice contacts.

In Boston, problems were encountered in identifying program participants who could be interviewed and finding female gang members, either in or out of the program, to interview. FORCE records on individual girls lacked uniformity and order, so two separate sets of sampling frames had to be developed, one compiled from case records maintained by the specialists and the other constructed from the sign-in sheets for program activities. Even with the assistance of program staff, it was difficult to find the girls identified through the sampling procedures. Most of the Boston sample is therefore a convenience sample of girls involved in the FORCE program who were made available to interviewers when girls randomly selected from program records could not be found.

228

In Seattle, only girls receiving services from the Atlantic Street Center were available for interview. The nonparticipants in Seattle came from three very different convenience samples: a probation caseload of serious offenders, a caseload of homeless adolescent females, and members of a church-affiliated program for adolescent females at risk.

The final distribution of interviews by program and site is shown in exhibit 1. The Pueblo site came the closest to achieving the numbers presented in the original design. In Seattle, the Atlantic Street Center simply had very few girls in its program. Program girls who were enrolled only in the drug education or Sisters in Common programs were not included in the outcome study sample. In Boston, few self-reported current or former gang members were in the program.

Interviews

The interview, adapted from instruments used in three federally funded studies of gang involvement (Cohen et al. 1994; Curry and Spergel 1992; Decker 1996), assessed gang involvement, delinquency, and program participation and impact. Pilot testing of an early version indicated male biases in the instrument. Consequently, it was revised to be more useful with a female population. In addition to questions on their entry into and activity in gangs, items were added on children and mothering, family attitudes, and female attitudes toward gangs. The instrument was also revised to reflect the activities and attitudes of young women who were not gang members by adding questions that asked such women why they had not joined a gang, how they felt about gangs, and what pressure they received from gangs. Hypothetical situations assessing their attitudes about gang involvement were presented. The interview covered delinquency, gang involvement, family patterns, academic performance, employability and job history, self-esteem, and substance abuse.

Data collection took place at the three sites during the final 12 months of scheduled program operation. At each site, local interviewers were responsible for setting up and conducting the interviews. For all except the program participants in Seattle, interviews were tape recorded.

Because of the differences among sampling techniques at each location and the difficulties in completing the planned number of interviews in Boston and Seattle, outcome data from each site were analyzed separately. Because the outcome interviews for the Pueblo program represent the

Exhibit 1: Interviews Completed, by Program Site, Program Involvement, and Type of Gang Involvement

Site/Girls' Program Status	Number of People in Target Samples: Members	Number of People in Target Samples: Nonmembers	Number of Completed Interviews: Current Members	Former Members	Nonmembers	Total
Pueblo Program Participants	30	30	19	9	32	60
Pueblo Nonparticipants	30	30	13	16	32	61
Boston Program Participants	30	30	5	7	45	57
Boston Nonparticipants	30	30	2	7	39	48
Seattle Program Participants	30	30	0	8	11	19
Seattle Nonparticipants	30	30	14	12	30	56

strongest research design, only the impact findings from Pueblo are presented in this report. Findings from all three sites are in the final report (Williams, Curry, and Cohen forthcoming).

Extent of Local Gang Problems and Female Involvement

Boston

Police and project personnel reported that the Boston area began to have serious youth gang problems beginning in 1987 and 1988. In an NIJ-funded study of law enforcement antigang resources, Curry et al. (1992) identified 70 gangs with 2,200 members in the Boston area. BHA staff reported, however, that the incidence of gang activity was probably higher, because official reports included only activities that could be tied directly to gangs. They described most gangs as locally formed and locally based; although gangs typically did not go to other public housing developments to cause problems, gang activity had been reported in both minority and white developments. Moreover, they reported that the nature and extent of gang activities varied among the BHA developments. For instance, drug selling appeared to be a specialized activity.

FORCE staff also reported hearing that women were becoming more involved in gangs. Females were likely to support male gang members in criminal activities in the developments, such as car theft and, especially, drug sales. Staff believed that girls were being recruited into gang activity at an increasingly young age. There had been an increase in the number of 14- to 16-year-old females in the developments who had their own apartments. These young women were often not in school and were sometimes living with a male partner who was involved in drug sales and were seen as being at risk of becoming involved in drug sales as well. FORCE staff also reported that there had been an "incredible" rise in violence among younger youths.

Pueblo

According to local officials, gangs in the Pueblo area during the early 1990s were locally organized and had few, if any, formal ties with nationally recognized gangs. Many of the gangs were associated with the old barrios (neighborhoods). Gang activities had largely been confined to intergang violence and a variety of petty crimes. According to a local gang task force report, there was no evidence that local gangs had developed into the sophisticated, for-profit organizations that have evolved in some urban areas. A 1994 Pueblo Police Department Crime Analysis and Gang Unit summary report showed 29 identified gangs and 630 members in their gang roster. Fifty-seven percent of the individuals listed were Hispanic males, 15 percent were white males, 10 percent were black males, 14 percent were Hispanic females, 3 percent were white females, and less than 1 percent were black females. Two-thirds of the group were between the ages of 16 and 20. One-quarter were between the ages of 21 and 30. According to the police, problems caused by gangs included graffiti and intimidation—both against each other and against strangers. In the early 1990s, most of the intimidation was taking place in the schools, but this activity decreased after police officers were assigned to high schools. Violence increased during 1993 and 1994, culminating in several high-profile driveby shootings, three deaths, and one critical wounding.

According to Pueblo project staff, the female gangs were "extremely visible" in the community, hiding weapons and drugs, organizing inhalant parties, and sheltering "outlaws." Pueblo's female gang members were characterized as being very much involved in exacerbating violence and crime, drug marketing, and precipitating violence against cliques of opposing gangs. Their role in the gang community was well known. More than a dozen "named" female cliques had been identified at the time program planning began.

Seattle

Seattle's youth gang problem, like that of many cities in the Pacific Northwest, escalated in the mid-1980s. Gangs from Los Angeles began moving north and had been active in Seattle since 1987. Although the city had a history of youth gangs before this migration, there was little gang violence. In the early 1990s, police identified four major gangs: Crips, Bloods, Black Gangster Disciples, and Southside Locos. According to the police, there were 125 documented gang members, with an estimated additional 3,000 to 4,000 youths involved in gang activity. Police estimated that two-thirds of drug sales in the area involved gang-involved youths.

Female gang activity in Seattle also rose during this period. In 1990, 16 percent of the youths referred for services to the Seattle Team for Youth were females. In 1991, this proportion had increased to 19 percent. The Seattle Police Department also reported that the young women were forming their own groups, quasi-gangs, or actual gangs. Some of the girls had formed "auxiliary" groups on their own. Moreover, they were often physically more aggressive than male gang members.

Process Evaluation Findings: Summary

Project Implementation

The first objective of the process evaluation was to describe the organization and implementation of these projects. The research questions for this objective focused on the organizational structure and staffing patterns of the projects, the types of staff training, the monitoring and recordkeeping systems used to track services, and the barriers to implementation.

Organization and staffing. The three projects were organized in very different ways. In two sites, the lead agency was a unit of local government. In Boston, the Community Initiatives Department of the Boston Housing Authority was the lead agency. In Seattle, the project was initiated by the Seattle Team for Youth, a consortium of school, social service, and community agencies created in 1990 to prevent or intervene in local youth gang participation. The Seattle Department of Housing and Human Services was the lead agency, and project activities were provided by two subcontractors. In the third project, the lead agency was the Pueblo Youth Services Bureau (PYSB), a private, nonprofit, community-based organization that had been serving Pueblo and the surrounding county since 1973.

The three projects also differed in their staffing patterns. In Pueblo, the executive director of PYSB served as the project director and had daily contact with program staff. A coordinator and three outreach workers were hired specifically for the project. In Boston, funding provided salaries for specialists in personal growth, leadership, and family as well as for the coordinator's position. Additional part-time recreation and support-group positions were never consistently filled. BHA provided a youth worker for each project site as an in-kind contribution. In Seattle, the Atlantic Street Center provided three case managers, each of whom managed the cases of 17 to 20 girls. There was one supervisor for the three case managers. In addition, approximately 10 women volunteered as mentors for the Sisters in Common portion of the program.

Staff training. In Pueblo, staff training focused on conflict mediation and resolution skills, signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol abuse, and providing information on sexuality, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. In Boston, the FORCE staff also identified more basic training needs: stress management, diversity, youth outreach strategies, and developing goals and objectives. For the most part, FORCE service delivery staff were paraprofessionals who typically lacked systematic training in the areas necessary to carry out many of their job activities. Compared with the staff in Pueblo, the FORCE staff felt that they had not been provided with adequate training. This may have been due in part to the differences between the two projects' organizational structures. In Pueblo, project staffers worked closely with the project director. This type of supervisory relationship did not exist for FORCE workers, who were much more isolated.

Monitoring and recordkeeping. For various reasons, monitoring and recordkeeping presented a challenge for these projects, as they do for many community-based prevention programs. In Boston, management information and reporting systems for the FORCE program were the most rudimentary of the three projects. Sign-in sheets to record name and activity were used by the youth workers to document the daily activities at each housing development. The coordinator tallied the sheets by hand each month to provide monthly BHA and quarterly FYSB progress reports. Collecting data to track program participants was most difficult in Seattle because the Seattle Team for Youth used separate contractors, each with its own approach to recordkeeping. The lead agency did not provide centralized project case tracking. In Pueblo, program staff kept individual files on all participants once consistent program operations began and maintained a detailed, accurate log on participant attendance. Although a personal computer was available to project staff, none of the case-file or service-delivery information was automated. Moreover, staff lacked the training to design and maintain electronic tracking systems, and it was unclear whether the software needed was available.

As a result, accurate, unduplicated counts of youths receiving program services, hours of service, and length of stay in the program were difficult to obtain. There was no consistency from site to site in the approach to keeping individual case records and service plans. Furthermore, it seemed clear that, aside from providing some numbers to satisfy Federal reporting requirements, none of the three projects made systematic use of the information they recorded on project participants. These findings are not unique to these three projects (Cohen et al. 1994) and illustrate the difficulty in conducting research in community-based demonstration projects. The lack of systematic client and service information makes it difficult to accurately describe the "service mix" or the extent of service delivery each participant received, which in turn makes it difficult to discover which prevention and intervention strategies and services are most effective.

Barriers to implementation. All three projects experienced implementation problems common to many demonstration programs. These included staff turnover, lack of transportation for participants, lack of parental participation, problems in implementing planned program activities, participant recruitment and retention problems, inadequate physical facilities, and inadequate local evaluation.

Staff turnover and difficulty in hiring appropriate staff were the most serious implementation challenges in each project. In Pueblo, the project director said that the pressure to begin project activities in a timely fashion was such that the original staff were hired in haste, so she was not able to find the "right" people. The result was a complete turnover of the service delivery staff by the end of the first year. The director believed that to be successful, staff needed to be culturally sensitive and responsive, able to manage stress, have good documentation skills, and possess a clear understanding of the youths with whom they would be working and the problems these youths may face. According to the director, it was also important for staff to be from (or known in) the communities where they work and be willing to "get down and dirty" to do whatever the job requires (i.e., staff shouldn't expect an 8-to-5 office job).

Similarly, in Boston, when several workers in the participating housing projects left the program, the participants often left with them and did not return. In Seattle, one of the subcontractors operating in the first 2 years of the program experienced major staff turnover, including the resignation of the director. This led to inadequate service delivery and cancellation of the subcontract. Staffing problems led to delays in implementing program activities in all of the projects. Thus, all of the projects had difficult startups and never fully implemented their original program designs.

In each project, it was difficult to get parents involved. In Pueblo, although parent involvement was seen as an important goal, attempts to engage parents in program activities met with only mixed success. The more successful efforts included one-to-one contact with parents in their own homes, having parents transport their own children to and from activities, and scheduling quarterly family activities. By the end of the second year, quarterly reports indicated that parental involvement had improved dramatically. Boston's workers encouraged parents to become involved by organizing talent shows, dinners, and mother-daughter nights, and Seattle staff invited parents to the Sisters in Common dinners held after the group meetings.

The poor physical condition of the buildings was an additional problem for two of the projects. At the time of the first Pueblo site visit, the PYSB headquarters was located in downtown Pueblo in a building that had significant structural and operating problems. Similarly, most of Boston's FORCE projects were located in rundown public housing projects. Some of the facilities could be described as no less than squalid, others were being renovated, and several others were poorly maintained and barely adequate.

Transportation for program participants was another obstacle. In Pueblo, the targeted communities were spread out, program participants came from different areas, and public transportation was deficient. Consequently, it was very difficult to get participants to and from the areas where activities took place. Similar transportation problems were reported in Boston and Seattle, although they were not as severe because both cities had adequate public transportation systems. In Boston, many project activities took place in the housing developments where the girls lived. In addition, both projects gave bus tokens to participants so they could get to services and activities. Staff from all three projects reported transporting girls in their own vehicles as well.

Project Services and Recruitment

The second objective of the process evaluation was to describe the services and activities of the projects and their participants. Research questions focused on documenting intervention strategies and services, methods used to recruit and retain youths, and the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Project services. Comparing prevention and intervention services among projects is often a problem because commonly accepted definitions of services have not been widely adopted (Cohen et al. 1994). To assess the services delivered in the projects studied, definitions were developed for 30 services commonly provided by youth prevention and intervention programs. These services were grouped into five broad strategies—individual, family, school, peer, and community—reflecting common areas of risk for gang and drug involvement. (Exhibit 2 shows services delivered at each site.) The types of services offered were identified by reviewing program records of the three projects, interviewing staff, and observing services being delivered and then classifying activities according to the definitions of service developed for this evaluation. Although the three projects were organized differently, all focused primarily on providing services to individual youths and (less often) their families. Even the "community" strategies were focused primarily at the individual level (e.g., offering a safe haven, cultural enrichment for participants, and tutoring or help with homework) rather than on communitywide changes such as education reform or community mobilization. All three projects were successful in providing a "core" mix of services, including social and life skills training, alternative activities (generally recreation), informal counseling, tutoring or homework support, mentoring and positive role modeling, and cultural enhancement for project participants.

Social and life skills training were defined as interventions designed to help youths develop ways to communicate, solve problems, and make decisions; to find ways to control anger and aggressive impulses (including conflict

Exhibit 2: Service Delivery Summary, by Program Site

Major Types of Service Provided	Boston	Pueblo	Seattle
Individual Strategies			
Social and life skills training	✔	✔	✔
Alternative activities	✔	✔	✔
Individual or group therapy			✔
Informal counseling	✔	✔	✔
Tutoring and homework support	✔	✔	✔
Mentoring/positive role model	✔	✔	✔
Case management/service access		✔	✔
Family Strategies			
Family therapy			
Family skills training			
Parent training programs			
Parent involvement activities	✔	✔	
Parent support groups	✔		
School Strategies			
Teaching reform			
School substance abuse/violence policy			
Goal setting for future education			
School-based youth advocates			
Peer Strategies			
Positive peer clubs or groups	✔	✔	
Correcting norm perceptions		✔	
Peer pressure resistance training		✔	
Positive peer models			
Peer leadership programs	✔		
Peer counseling		✔	
Peer support groups		✔	✔
Community Strategies			
Cultural enhancement	✔	✔	✔
Crisis mediation			
Community service	✔	✔	
Community education		✔	
Community organizing			
Safe haven programs	✔	✔	

resolution); to identify and understand complex feelings and emotions; and to acquire or refine basic household skills. All three projects were very active in providing these services. Social and life skills training were the service areas most likely to contain gender-specific content. Frequently, the topics chosen were specifically designed to meet the concerns and needs of adolescent females (e.g., self-esteem, personal grooming and hygiene, pregnancy prevention, career goals, etc.).

Prevention programs typically included organized sports or recreational activities in a structured, supervised setting as an alternative to gang and drug-related activities. These activities, which also provided structure, furnished positive role models and peers, and helped develop a sense of personal competence and control, made up the major portion of the programs at all three study sites. Frequently, they gave participants the opportunity to experience a range of activities that would not normally be available to them.

Informal counseling, as defined in this evaluation, involved activities organized by program staff who had not had formal training in counseling and therapy. It often took place when a "teachable moment" occurred during other program activities. In some cases, it included "crisis counseling," when a youth had an immediate problem, and program staff helped her to explore solutions. This type of counseling was an important staff role in all three projects. As happens with many community-based prevention programs for youth, much of this informal counseling took place in connection with other program activities. The participants' interactions with one another were often used as teaching opportunities by the project staff.

In prevention programs, teachers, parent volunteers, program staff, members of the community, or older students often provide tutoring and homework support. Both the Boston and Pueblo projects offered some of these types of support. The Pueblo program had the most organized educational support component. Staff were available twice a week after school, in participating schools, to provide this service. The schools offered space, supplies, and media equipment. School staff interviewed for the evaluation saw this as an especially valuable service. In Boston, this activity was left to the discretion of the individual youth workers and was not offered at every site. Some youth workers successfully incorporated these activities into daily routines. Those who did not seemed to feel that it was difficult to persuade girls to participate or that their meeting space was not conducive to studying. Seattle also offered tutoring, primarily to a small group of Southeast Asian youths. Tutors were recruited from the University of Washington. None of the projects became involved in such school strategies as policy development, reform, or advocacy.

All three projects provided some type of positive female role models to participants, though this type of service was more formally organized in Pueblo and Seattle than in Boston. Pueblo had the best developed formal mentoring component. Participation was voluntary; girls were matched with a mentor only if they wanted to be. All mentor candidates had to pass a background check (including police checks and social service register check for child abuse) and go through a formal training process before being "matched" with a program participant. Each mentor sponsored one girl and contracted for a minimum of 2 hours per week for 9 months. Typical activities for mentors and their "matches" included attending community events and events sponsored by PYSB, shopping, talking on the phone, eating out, playing sports, and sometimes just "hanging out" at home. One mentor explained that she was trying to expose her "match" to new experiences, work-related activities, and alternative lifestyles that she might otherwise not experience. PYSB also scheduled events for mentors and "matches" once or twice a month, usually on weekends.

Cultural enhancement components of prevention programs focus on both increasing youths' awareness of other cultures and reinforcing positive cultural identity and pride through increasing their knowledge of their own culture's history, traditions, and values. All of the projects attempted to broaden the cultural perspectives of participants. In Pueblo, for example, staff organized a variety of activities, such as attending cultural fairs and listening to speakers talk about different cultures. Other activities focused on the richness of the Hispanic cultural heritage. Exposing participants to other cultures was sometimes a challenge, because of the isolation of the Pueblo community. Whenever possible, staff would organize trips to Colorado Springs and Denver to provide these experiences.

The service delivery model implemented in these projects differed from site to site and within programs that had multiple service delivery sites. In addition, the projects differed in the degree to which they had a coherent service delivery program. In Seattle, three subcontractors provided services, and participants received some, but not all, of the services. In Boston, though the personal growth and leadership specialists presented their workshops each week in every site, each youth worker tended to organize different activities, depending on his or her own interests and those of the girls. Services were offered most uniformly in Pueblo, with most participants receiving social and life-skills training. This training was typically part of the afterschool activities, which also included workshops, guest speakers, lectures, and group discussions. Pueblo also had the best developed mentoring program.

Recruitment and retention. In Pueblo and Boston, participation was voluntary. Outreach by youth workers was the primary means of recruitment in both projects, although referrals were also received from other sources. In contrast, participants in the Seattle project were required to participate as part of their conditions of probation.

The national evaluation of the FYSB Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program (Cohen et al. 1994) identified several barriers to recruiting and retaining youths in prevention programs like the ones described here. New prevention programs can take a long time to gain the level of community acceptance necessary to maintain a consistent level of participation. With only 3 years of funding, lack of such acceptance can be a significant problem for new projects. Program names may also affect program acceptance. Prevention program names that include such words as “gang” or “drugs” may deter parents (and some youths) from participating because of the potential for stigma associated with these terms. Transportation was cited as a major problem for recruiting and retaining youth as was frequent staff turnover and the associated lapses in service delivery, which can cause youths to drop out of prevention projects.

The three projects reviewed in this evaluation were able to avoid some, but not all, of these barriers. The Pueblo Youth Services Bureau and the Atlantic Street Center in Seattle were the best situated in terms of “name recognition” and acceptance in the local community. Because both organizations had long, positive connections to the communities they served, they were able to establish a new program without investing the time usually needed to gain community acceptance. In contrast, in some of the housing developments, the FORCE project faced considerable resistance to establishing the program. A great deal of effort was necessary to increase the project’s visibility and community trust.

Both Boston and Pueblo avoided potentially stigmatizing the project participants by using positive project titles that did not include the words “gangs” or “drugs.” The names Movimiento Ascendencia (Upward Movement) and FORCE (Females Obtaining Resources and Cultural Enrichment) were chosen for the positive images they projected, an important factor for some parents in allowing their daughters to participate. Although the Seattle project did not use an overall project name, its Sisters in Common component also projected a positive name and image.

The projects were less successful in overcoming the lack of transportation and staff turnover. Access to reliable transportation was a problem for all three projects. This was especially serious in Pueblo because, as noted, the project covered large distances, and public transportation was inadequate. Staff turnover was a significant problem in Boston and Pueblo. Some programs changed services and times of operation to better accommodate participants. Hiring staff from the community being served proved to be a helpful tactic for ensuring program participation.

Project participants. The interviews with clients revealed some differences in the populations served at each site. The average age for participants in the three program sites was 14. The girls served by FORCE in Boston were significantly younger than those served in Pueblo, whereas the girls served in Seattle were significantly older than those in Pueblo. In addition, the groups differed ethnically; most participants in Boston and Seattle were black, and 95 percent of the participants in Pueblo were Latina.

Each program was distinctive in the characteristics of its participants because, as stated earlier, there was no uniform approach to recruitment. In Pueblo and Boston, participation was voluntary and participants were recruited primarily by youth workers. In Pueblo, the staff recruitment efforts focused on the wider Pueblo community. In Boston, recruitment was more narrowly focused on the girls in the housing developments where the program was located. By contrast, in Seattle, program participation was mandatory; girls were referred to the project as a condition of probation. Retention of participants was an issue in both Boston and Pueblo when the projects experienced staff turnover, but was less of a problem in Seattle, because of the mandatory nature of participation.

There was a clear difference between participants in Boston and those in the other two sites in self-reported previous delinquency and gang involvement. Program participants in Boston were significantly less likely than those in Pueblo and Seattle to have had contact with the juvenile justice system and to have been involved in gang activity. In fact, the Boston project had limited contact with gang members or gang-involved girls. To a great extent, this variation was deliberate. The FORCE program in Boston was essentially a prevention program dealing with younger girls, whereas the Seattle project focused on a small number of older girls with histories of serious and chronic delinquency, and Pueblo served girls in need of both prevention and intervention services.

Local Evaluation

The third objective of the process evaluation was to describe the implementation of the local evaluations carried out by each program. Research questions focused on the approach taken by local evaluators at each project and how effective the projects were in conducting their local evaluation. The project applications submitted to FYSB presented evaluation plans with strong designs that included both process and outcome components and plans for conducting local evaluations. The Pueblo and Boston projects contracted with outside evaluators throughout the funding period, whereas Seattle used the services of the internal evaluator on staff at the Department of Housing and Human Services.

The original proposal for FORCE outlined an ambitious evaluation plan calling for both qualitative and quantitative data collection to assess the effectiveness of program implementation and outcome. The Pueblo project also had the potential for a strong local evaluation. Its proposal called for both process and impact data collection and analysis. The impact evaluation was to include pre- and post-testing of program participants and control group subjects from a neighboring town. Finally, the Seattle project's plans for the outcome component of its local evaluation consisted of a self-esteem questionnaire filled out by staff for each participant before and after program completion, a self-report questionnaire filled out by each participant at the beginning and end of each group discussion session, and a decisionmaking questionnaire completed by each participant at the beginning and end of each session. In addition, attendance forms and quarterly report forms were to be submitted for all participants.

Unfortunately, because of bureaucratic red tape, slow startup, and delays in implementing the evaluation designs, none of the local evaluations produced useful findings. In Boston, the original evaluator left at the end of the first year, so no evaluation was completed that year. BHA then contracted out for the second- and third-year studies, but signed contracts too late in the year for the evaluator to complete interviews, so data were not systematically collected, and no reports were produced. Pueblo's evaluators were very slow to develop and implement data-collection instruments, so completion rates for outcome instruments were low. Only 144 of 237 participants completed the pretests and of those, only 28 completed both pre- and post-tests. In Seattle, the evaluator from the Department of Housing and Human Services designed three surveys. After the first year, program staff refused to use the surveys, and new survey instruments were not developed, so only a year 1 report was produced. It was of limited value because the contractors and the program design changed after the first year.

Impact Evaluation Findings: Summary

The impact evaluation, which addressed the objectives of describing the background, activities, and gang and drug involvement for participants and nonparticipants and examining each program's impact on participants, was seriously limited by the data collection problems at the Seattle and Boston programs. As noted above, program and comparison populations were obtained by different methods at each location. The comparison groups at the sites were not matched in any way at the time of their selection, and the evaluators were not in a position to "dictate" how the program and comparison groups were to be selected by the sites. The number of gang-involved girls in the Boston and Seattle programs was much smaller than anticipated by the original impact evaluation design. Of the three projects, Pueblo's was the most successful in implementing the original program design. For these reasons, the impact evaluation portion of the report focuses on the findings from the Pueblo program only. (For additional information on the Boston and Seattle sites, see Williams, Curry, and Cohen forthcoming.)

Demographic and Social Characteristics of Participants

The evaluation's fourth objective called for a description of the demographic and social characteristics of the participants and members of the comparison groups. Research questions focused on describing demographics, history of delinquency, family patterns and living situations, academic performance, and self-esteem for both groups. Program participants in Movimiento Ascendencia were randomly selected. An early count (after about 50 girls had been interviewed) showed more gang than nongang girls in the program sample. A chi-square test comparing the percentage of girls that reported being, or having been, gang members with a 50–50 breakdown showed no statistically significant difference. Therefore, it is reasonable to report that the program served equal numbers of gang members and nonmembers. The snowball sample of nonparticipants relied on schools and juvenile justice system contacts to recruit a comparison group of young women who had not participated in the program. The girls in the comparison group who had been gang members were more likely to describe themselves as "former" gang members than did the girls in the program (55.2 percent compared with 32.1 percent), but this difference was not statistically significant.

The program and comparison groups of girls in the Pueblo sample did not differ statistically on several potentially important variables, including age, self-reported gang membership, ethnicity, household structure, and school status (see exhibit 3). There were 64 girls in the two groups who reported having never been gang members (32 in each), and there were no significant differences between the two on risk for gang involvement. Gang involvement short of being a gang member was measured by the girls' meeting any one of six criteria identified by Curry and Spergel (1992) and Curry (2000). These

Exhibit 3: Pueblo Program Participants and Nonparticipants Compared on Selected Variables

	Program Participants (*n* = 60)		Nonparticipants (*n* = 61)	
Total Sample (*N* = 121)	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Ever Been a Gang Member	28	46.6	29	47.5
Chicana	57	95.0	52	85.2
Two-Biological-Parent Household	27	45.0	27	44.3
Single-Mother Household	25	41.7	19	31.1
School Dropout	8	13.3	10	16.4
	Program Participants (*n* = 32)		**Control Group (*n* = 32)**	
Girls Who Were Never Gang Members (*N* = 64)	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Any Gang Involvement*	25	78.1	21	65.6
Gangs in Community	10	31.3	16	50.0
Gang Member in Family	7	21.9	8	25.0
Date Gang Member	12	37.5	12	37.5

Note: The mean age was 14.6 years for program participants and 15.1 for the control group. No differences are statistically significant at .01 level.

*Gang Involvement = self-reporting one or more of six criteria (Curry and Spergel 1992): wearing gang colors, hanging out with gang members, having gang members as friends, engaging in drug use or vandalism with gang members, flashing gang signs, or involved in gang fighting.

included wearing gang colors, "hanging out" with gang members, having gang members as friends, engaging in drug use or vandalism with gang members, flashing gang signs, or involvement in gang fighting. Neither group of girls was statistically more likely to live in communities with gangs, have a gang member in their family, or date gang members.

The three scales of self-esteem developed by Hare were among the key variables analyzed in this evaluation (Hare 1977, 1980). These measures of self-esteem was designed specifically for use with minority youths. It can be argued that these measures can just as easily be interpreted as indexes of social attachment or social efficacy in particular types of relationships. To avoid ongoing arguments in the literature over the "true" definition of self-esteem, the evaluation treated the Hare scales simply as a measure of how a girl felt about her relationships with household members, teachers and students at school, and her peer group. This made the measures important indicators of the girls' relationships with key institutions and informal groups. The Hare scores were computed as sums within each relational category, so that a higher score represented a better feeling about the relationship. When the average scores for program participants and nonparticipants were compared, no significant differences were found (exhibit 4).

Interviewers in Pueblo had access to police and juvenile court worker information on individual girls, so that official records for each girl could be checked. Program participants were slightly more likely to have been arrested than the comparison population (46.7 percent compared with 41.0 percent) and were more likely to have been on juvenile probation than comparison group members (31.7 percent versus 21.3 percent), but fewer had been incarcerated (10.1 percent compared with 21.3 percent). This latter finding may derive from the fact that currently incarcerated girls could be part of the comparison group while there were no currently incarcerated program participants

Exhibit 4: Mean Scores on Hare Self-Esteem Inventory, by Relationship Type, Program Participants and Nonparticipants (Pueblo)

	Relations		
	Household	School	Peer
Program Participants (*n* = 60)	30.23	24.33	29.53
Nonparticipants (*n* = 61)	29.00	24.77	28.93

Note: No pair of means is statistically different at the .05 level.

(see exhibit 5). Official records also showed that the comparison sample of girls had been arrested more frequently (3.9 arrests per person, compared to 2.7). None of these differences, however, was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Since it has long been assumed that most juvenile offending is not officially detected, official contact with the juvenile justice system was supplemented with self-reported data when possible. The interview schedule contained a number of self-reported items that were translated into "ever used violence," "ever committed a property offense," "ever used alcohol," and "ever used other drugs." Program girls were more likely than members of the comparison group to report having ever committed each kind of offense. The differences, however, were statistically significant only for property and drug offenses (exhibit 6).

From these comparisons (which, in the opinion of the evaluators, provide adequate measures of risk for gang involvement), it is safe to conclude that girls served by the Pueblo program were as much at risk of gang involvement and delinquency as a comparable sample of girls from the community served.

Estimating Program Impact

The focus of the final evaluation objective was to understand the impact of the services provided to the participants. The analyses address the following research questions: Were the services provided by each program perceived as helpful by the participants, and were the programs effective in reducing the delinquency, increasing the educational attainment, and improving the self-esteem of participants?

Exhibit 5: Officially Recorded Contact With the Juvenile Justice System, Program Participants and Nonparticipants (Pueblo)

	Had Been Arrested		Had Been on Probation		Had Been Incarcerated	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program Participants (*n* = 60)	28	46.7	19	31.7	6	10.0
Nonparticipants (*n* = 61)	25	41.0	13	21.3	13	21.3

No difference is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Exhibit 6: Self-Reported Delinquency, by Type of Offense, Program Participants and Nonparticipants (Pueblo)

	Violence		Property*		Alcohol		Other Drug†	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program Participants (*n* = 60)	34	56.7	51	85.0	46	76.7	45	75.0
Nonparticipants (*n* = 61)	30	49.2	32	52.5	40	65.6	33	54.1

* Difference statistically significant at the .001 level.
† Difference statistically significant at the .05 level.

Helpfulness of services. Data on services received were extracted from program files for 60 Pueblo participants. Services were recorded by program name, type of service, dates, and number of hours. (Exhibit 7 shows Pueblo services by type, average number of hours per participant, proportion remembering the service, and perceived helpfulness.) Length of participation in the program from first to last recorded service ranged from 1.3 months to 20 months, with the average length 8 months and the median 6 months.

Delinquency. It is useful to note limitations in available outcome measures. All information was obtained directly from the girls. The interview instruments

Exhibit 7: Helpfulness of Services, by Type of Service (Pueblo)

		Percent of Participants Who			
Service Type	Mean Hours per Participant	Remembered Service	Found Service "Very Helpful"	Found Service "Helpful"	Found Service "Not Helpful"
Seasonal Activities	10.7	91.5	16.3	81.4	2.3
Self-Esteem Building	6.3	91.7	25.0	66.7	8.3
Conflict Resolution	4.6	69.2	25.9	72.2	1.9
Mentoring	3.6	88.9	30.2	62.8	7.0
Cultural Awareness	3.5	83.1	25.9	66.7	7.4
Community Service	2.8	92.0	13.6	81.8	4.5
Educational Support	2.6	95.8	43.5	56.5	0.0
Advocacy	0.6	87.5	57.1	42.9	0.0
Group Counseling	0.2	100.0	33.3	6.7	0.0

included questions about a variety of delinquent behaviors. Most were worded so that time could not be taken into account. Seven items, however, were specifically worded to compare more recent behavior with past behavior. Program participants were first asked whether they had engaged in any of seven delinquent activities since becoming involved in the program. They were then asked to recall if they had ever engaged in any of these activities before becoming involved in the program. Nonparticipants were asked whether they had engaged in any of these activities in the past year and at any previous time. There are known methodological problems with such retrospective questions. If the question format has a built-in bias, one would expect it to be in favor of the program having an effect, especially since, in most cases, the interviewers approached the program girls through their connection with the program.

The seven types of delinquent behavior the girls were asked about were throwing objects (such as rocks, snowballs, or bottles) at cars or people; purposely damaging or destroying someone else's property; running away from home; knowingly buying, selling, or holding stolen goods (or trying to do any of these things); stealing or trying to steal something worth less than $50; stealing or trying to steal something worth more than $50; and carrying a concealed weapon other than a plain pocketknife. In addition to these measures of delinquency, information about school grades was obtained from the girls in the same retrospective-recall format. The Hare measures of self-esteem (discussed in the previous section) were also compared for both groups.

Pueblo's program did not exclude current or active gang members from participating. Given the correlation between gang membership and other types of delinquency, it is important to control for this variable in assessing the impact of the program and its components on self-reported delinquency. There were no differences between current and former gang members on whether they had "ever" engaged in delinquent behavior. Therefore, gang involvement was defined as "ever having been a gang member." It is also important to control for previous delinquent behavior. Logistic regression models made it possible to control for previous delinquency and gang membership in measuring program impact. (See exhibit 8.)

In each analysis, represented by the rows (exhibit 8), the dichotomous dependent variable is a type of self-reported delinquency. There are three dichotomous independent variables in each analysis: self-reported previous delinquency, ever having been a gang member, and being a program participant. Setting the analysis up in this way makes it possible to control for

Exhibit 8: Logistic Regression Analysis—Delinquent Behavior (Pueblo)

Delinquent Activity	Previous Report of Delinquent Activity[*]	Ever Been a Gang Member	Program Participant
Throwing Objects (*N* = 120)	1.88	0.65	-1.46[†]
Damaging Property (*N* = 121)	1.41	0.76	-0.97[‡]
Running Away (*N* = 120)	2.03	0.97[‡]	-1.36[†]
Buying, Selling, or Holding Stolen Goods (*N* = 120)	2.18	1.76[†]	-1.12[‡]
Stealing Goods Worth Less Than $50 (*N* = 121)	2.16	1.02	-0.79
Stealing Goods Worth More Than $50 (*N* = 121)	1.50	1.76[‡]	-1.53[‡]
Concealed Weapon (*N* = 116)	2.07	1.65[†]	-0.42

Note: Types of self-reported delinquency regressed on previous self-reports of same activity, ever having been a gang member, and program participation.

[*] Difference statistically significant at the .001 level.

[†] Difference statistically significant at the .01 level.

[‡] Difference statistically significant at the .05 level.

self-reported delinquency before enrollment in the program as well as for gang involvement in measuring the program's impact on self-reported delinquency after enrollment.

The regression coefficients for previous reporting of each type of delinquent behavior were statistically significant. For all seven types of delinquent behavior, self-reported delinquency was reduced, and for five, the coefficients were statistically significant. Even when previous delinquency was controlled, gang membership had a statistically significant impact on four delinquent behaviors. Controlling for previous delinquency and gang membership, there were statistically significant program effects in reducing five of the seven types of delinquency. All program-effect coefficients had negative signs, indicating a reduction in delinquent behavior associated with program participation.

The seven delinquency items for behavior since becoming a program member had a Cronbach's alpha[2] of .801, and those for previous delinquent behavior had a Cronbach's alpha of .793. This made it feasible to treat the seven items as a measure of an underlying general dimension of delinquency. Girls were given a score on a scale running from zero (for no postprogram self-reported delinquency) to seven (if they had reported engaging in all seven types of delinquency after leaving the program). Then, each girl's preprogram self-reported delinquency on a one-to-seven scale was subtracted from her postprogram score. This computation was used as a change score. For nonparticipants, the average change score was –0.38. For program participants, the average change score was –1.42. This difference was statistically significant at the .01 level.

School success. As noted earlier, the Pueblo program excelled in reaching out to girls at risk for gang involvement and delinquency. Participants in Movimiento Ascendencia were somewhat more likely to have been high school dropouts than girls in the comparison group. Program participants also reported lower current and previous school grades than girls not in the program. Of program participants, 46 percent reported earning grades of D and F the year before entering the program and 34 percent reported C's and D's. For nonparticipants, the comparable percentages for the previous year's grades were 36 percent and 14 percent. If A's and B's are assigned a value of 4, B's and C's a value of 3, C's and D's a value of 2, and D's and F's a value of 1, participants in Pueblo earned an average reported grade of 1.86 the year before entering the program, compared with 2.42 for the comparison group. This difference was statistically significant at the .05 level. The current-year mean grade of 2.70 for participants and 2.97 for the comparison group still indicated lower grades for participants, but the gap between the two groups had narrowed and was no longer statistically significant.

Self-esteem. Correlations between the number of hours spent in self-esteem enhancement activities and each of the three components of the Hare self-esteem scale were computed. None was significantly related to the number of hours spent in self-esteem programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Recent research on prevention shows that multicomponent programs that intervene across risk factors and provide interventions across many domains (e.g., community, family, school, peer, and individual) are most effective in reducing delinquency (Kelley et al. 1997; Sherman et al. 1998). Moore (1991: 35–39) sketched an outline of intervention programs for Mexican-American gang members dating from the 1940s that identified the most important programs as being community-based and empowered residents to exercise control over their social worlds. According to Moore, while they "rarely transformed either the gang or any gang member . . . they provided important links to conventionality—links that were missing for increasing proportions of the young gang members."

Of the three projects included in this evaluation, Movimiento Ascendencia in Pueblo offered the most comprehensive services. The project components addressed the key factors correlated with female gang involvement and provided the link to conventionality Moore described. In addition, the Pueblo project specifically targeted gang members and gang-involved girls. For gang intervention programs to be successful, Spergel and colleagues (1994) recommended that they avoid either denying or exaggerating community gang problems. Acknowledging the existence of gang and drug problems in the community makes it easier to assess the risks of being involved in gangs and promotes prevention. The findings of the present study suggest that future program initiatives should be explicit in requiring that prevention and intervention projects address the multiple risk factors for gang and drug involvement. Funding levels should reflect the importance of these efforts.

Organizational structure and strong leadership can be key components of successful program implementation. The most successful program in this evaluation and others studied by two of the authors (Cohen et al. 1994) were operated by nonprofit organizations with strong "hands-on" leadership, minimal levels of bureaucracy, and close ties to the local community. The process evaluation revealed that the directors of these projects were dedicated and committed to their work; kept lines of communication open; and provided their staff with adequate training, supervision, and support. These conditions were observed most strongly in the Pueblo project. Projects operated or overseen by organizations with large, cumbersome bureaucracies, such as those in Boston and Seattle, where those involved in day-to-day operations had no decisionmaking authority, suffered from mismanagement, lack of adequate oversight, and poor methods of funding and subcontracting. Projects in smaller organizations were more flexible and responsive to clients' needs. These findings suggest that funding agencies could help ensure successful project implementation by giving preference to projects proposed by organizations with a strong leadership that have few levels of separation between decisionmakers and program activities.

All three projects encountered major problems with their local evaluations, ranging from contracting issues (too little funding, subcontracts signed too late) to evaluators who were not familiar with the program and lack of adequate recordkeeping and data. Projects had little difficulty cooperating with the national evaluation effort because it imposed a minimal burden on them; local staff were paid by the national evaluators, and their chief responsibilities were to provide lists of participants and make participants available to be interviewed. They were not asked to conduct any special data collection for the national evaluation.

At the time these projects were funded, they generally set aside 5 percent of their total budgets for evaluations. Recent experiences with other agencies (e.g., Cohen and Johnson 1998), showed that similar drug prevention demonstration programs that committed a higher percentage of funds to evaluation had evaluations of a significantly higher quality. In addition, several more recent Federal demonstration programs (such as the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's "Starting Early, Starting Smart") required the participation of all grant recipients on a cross-site evaluation committee, which planned the study for a year before implementation. These evaluations are a generation improved over the local evaluations of the projects reported here. Field evaluation research has shown that a partnership between program and evaluation staff is vital to successful implementation and evaluation (Resnicow et al. 2001). A mutually beneficial relationship between program staff and evaluators must be established early and nurtured. In none of the three projects reported here was there this type of relationship.

Evaluation designs frequently change once a program begins operation, and these projects were no exception. The outcome evaluation was hampered by lack of adequate control groups at two of the three sites, and by being compelled to use a retrospective pre-post design by default because the evaluation was funded after the projects began. In addition, for a variety of reasons local evaluators did not follow through on the proposed evaluation plans, with the result being incomplete or missing local process and outcome evaluations. This lack of followthrough, particularly in the local process evaluations, not only deprives projects of the ability to make midcourse corrections based on systematic research but also prevents the field from improving over time.

In the future, sponsoring agencies should fund evaluations 6 months to a year before projects are funded (or, preferably, with a year's planning before implementation), require that grant recipients submit written plans that contain outcome as well as process objectives, and develop a data-collection plan that indicates how the data will be obtained to measure whether the outcome objectives have been met. Demonstration project administrators should be required to develop memoranda of understanding with all parties to ensure cooperation; generate comparison or control groups; and collect a uniform core dataset on program participants, operations, and activities. Funding agencies should also require that local evaluators conduct both process and outcome evaluations and that they submit quarterly evaluation status reports with detailed updates on project implementation, on changes (if any) to the research design, on progress in collecting data with treatment and control groups, and on any problems encountered. Continued funding should be contingent on providing this information to the funding agency (or its designee) and cooperating with outside evaluators.

Such information would alert project monitors at funding agencies when there are problems in project implementation and when the evaluation design or data collection plans need to change because of problems in implementing the original plan. The information would also be a red flag when local evaluations are having difficulty in implementation and would allow for more immediate intervention. Funding agencies could proactively assist grant recipients with their evaluations by providing uniform instruments and sample data collection forms, holding annual "findings" meetings, and offering technical assistance in measuring whether annual objectives have been met.

Note

1. Snowball sampling is a method often used in field research for drawing a nonprobability sample in which each person interviewed is asked to suggest additional people to interview.

2. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of how well a group of items focuses on a single idea or construct. In most social science applications, .80 or higher is considered an acceptable level of reliability.

References

Bjerregaard, B., and C. Smith. 1993. "Gender Differences in Gang Participation, Delinquency, and Substance Use." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 9(4): 329–355.

Campbell, A. 1984. *The Girls in the Gang*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Chesney-Lind, M., and J.M. Hagedorn, eds. 1999. *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs, and Gender*. Chicago: Lake View Press.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Chesney-Lind, M., R.G. Sheldon, and K.A. Joe. 1996. "Girls, Delinquency, and Gang Membership." In *Gangs in America* (2d ed.). ed. C.R. Huff. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage: 185–204.

Cohen, M., K. Williams, A. Bekelman, and S. Crosse. 1994. *National Evaluation of the Youth Gang Drug Prevention Program. Volume 1: Final Report.* Bethesda, MD: DSG, Inc.

Cohen, M., and J. Johnson. 1998. *Findings From a Meta-Analysis of Violence Prevention Grantees.* Bethesda, MD: Development Services Group, Inc.

Curry, G.D. 1999a. "Race, Ethnicity and Gender Issues in Gangs: Reconciling Police Data." In *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Issues and Making POP Work* (vol. 2), ed. C.S. Brito and T. Allan. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum: 63–89.

———. 1999b. "Responding to Female Gang Involvement." In *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs, and Gender,* ed. M. Chesney-Lind and J.M. Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press: 133–153.

———. 2000. "Self-Reported Gang Involvement and Officially Recorded Delinquency," *Criminology* 38: 1253–1274.

Curry, G.D., R.A. Ball, and R.J. Fox. 1994. *Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping.* Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. June. NCJ 148345.

Curry, G.D., R.A. Ball, R.J. Fox, and D. Stone. 1992. *National Assessment of Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Information Resources.* Draft final report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 147399.

Curry, G.D., and I.A. Spergel. 1992. "Gang Involvement and Delinquency Among Hispanic and African-American Adolescent Males." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 29(3): 273–291.

Decker, S.H. 1996. "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence." *Justice Quarterly* 13: 243–264.

Esbensen, F.A., E.P. Deschenes, and L.T. Winfree, Jr. 1999. "Differences Between Gang Girls and Gang Boys." *Youth and Society* 31(1): 27–53.

Esbensen, F.A., and D. Huizinga. 1993. “Gangs, Drugs, and Delinquency in a Survey of Urban Youth.” *Criminology* 31: 565–587.

Esbensen, F.A., and L.T. Winfree, Jr. 1998. “Race and Gender Differences Between Gang and Nongang Youths: Results from a Multisite Survey.” *Justice Quarterly* 15(3): 505–526.

Fagan, J. 1990. “Social Processes of Delinquency and Drug Use Among Urban Gangs.” In *Gangs in America,* ed. C.R. Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 183–219.

Fleisher, M.S. 1998. *Dead End Kids: Gang Girls and the Boys They Know.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Hagedorn, J.M., and M.L. Devitt. 1999. “Fighting Female: The Social Construction of Female Gangs.” In *Female Gangs in America: Essays on Girls, Gangs, and Gender,* ed. M. Chesney-Lind and J.M. Hagedorn. Chicago: Lake View Press: 256–276.

Hare, Bruce. 1977. “Racial and Socioeconomic Variation in Preadolescent Area-Specific and General Self-Esteem.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 1: 31–51.

———. 1980. “Self-Perception and Academic Achievement: Variations in a Desegregated Setting.” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137(6): 683–89.

Horowitz, R. 1983. *Honor and the American Dream: Culture and Identity in a Chicano Community.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Huff, C.R., ed. 1990. *Gangs in America.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Joe, K., and M. Chesney-Lind. 1995. “Just Every Mother’s Angel: An Analysis of Gender and Ethnic Variations in Youth Gang Membership.” *Gender and Society* 9: 408–430.

Kelley, B.T., R. Loeber, K. Keenan, and M. DeLamatre. 1997. *Developmental Pathways in Boys Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior. OJJDP Bulletin.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. December. NCJ 165692.

Miller, J. 2001. *One of the Guys: Girls, Gangs, and Gender.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, J., and S.H. Decker. 2001. "Young Women and Gang Violence: Gender, Street Offending, and Violent Victimization in Gangs." *Justice Quarterly* 18(1): 87–114.

Moore, J.W. 1978. *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

———. 1991. *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

National Institute of Justice. 1992. *Action Plan Development for the Gangs Initiative.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

———. 2000. 1998 *National Youth Gang Survey: Summary.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 183109.

National Youth Gang Center. 1999. *1996 National Youth Gang Survey: Summary.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 173964.

Resnicow, K., R. Braithwaite, C. Dilorio, R, Vaughan, M.I. Cohen, and G. Uhl. 2001. "Preventing Substance Use in High Risk Youth: Evaluation Challenges and Solutions." *The Journal of Primary Prevention* 21(3): 399–415.

Sherman, L.W., D.C. Gottfredson, D.L. MacKenzie, J. Eck, P. Reuter, and S.D. Bushway. 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising.* Research In Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. July. NCJ 171676.

Spergel, I.A. 1990. "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change." In *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* (vol. 12), ed. M. Tonry and N. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 171–275.

Spergel, I.A., R. Chance, K. Ehrensaft, T. Regulus, C. Kane, R. Laseter, A. Alexander, and S. Oh. 1994. *Gang Suppression and Intervention: Community Models.* Washington, DC:, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 148202.

Thrasher, F.M. 1963. *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (originally published in 1927).

Williams, K., D. Curry, and M. Cohen. Forthcoming. *Final Report on the Evaluation of Gang Programs for Female Adolescents.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

Chapter 9

Reducing Gang Violence in Boston

Anthony A. Braga
David M. Kennedy
Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management
Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Acknowledgments

This research was supported under award 94–IJ–CX–0056 from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Funding was also received from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. The authors would like to thank Paul Evans, James Jordan, Gary French, Paul Joyce, and the members of the Boston Gun Project working group for their support in this research enterprise. We also would like to thank Lois Mock of the National Institute of Justice for her steadfast support, guidance, and patience in connection with this project.

Abstract

Operation Ceasefire is a problem-oriented policing intervention aimed at reducing youth homicide and youth firearms violence in Boston. It represented an innovative partnership between researchers and practitioners to assess the city's youth homicide problem and implement an intervention designed to have a substantial near-term impact on the problem. Operation Ceasefire was based on the "pulling levers" deterrence strategy, which focused criminal justice attention on a small number of chronically offending gang-involved youth responsible for much of Boston's youth homicide problem. A rigorous evaluation suggests that the Ceasefire intervention was associated with significant reductions in youth homicide victimization, "shots fired" calls for service, and gun assault incidents in Boston. Although the deterrence strategy was the key element of the Operation Ceasefire intervention, the gang violence reduction initiative was supported and strengthened by other program elements, including social intervention, opportunity provision, and community organization strategies.

Although overall homicide rates in the United States declined between the 1980s and 1990s, youth homicide rates, particularly incidents involving firearms, increased dramatically (Fox 1996; Cook and Laub 1998). Like many large cities in the United States, Boston experienced an epidemic of youth violence beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through the early 1990s. Measured as a homicide problem, the epidemic was confined almost entirely to the city's poor black neighborhoods, was concentrated among youths ages 18 to 24, and was largely a firearms problem (Kennedy and Braga 1998). Youth homicide in Boston (ages 24 and under) increased 230 percent—from 22 victims in 1987 to 73 victims in 1990—and remained high even after the 1990 peak of the epidemic. Between 1991 and 1995, Boston averaged about 44 youth homicides per year.

As the United States was experiencing this epidemic of youth violence, the capacity of police departments to design and implement creative, new operational strategies also increased through the advent of "community" and "problem-oriented" policing (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990; Goldstein 1990). Beginning in 1995, an interagency working group of Harvard University researchers, members of the Boston Police Department (BPD), and other criminal justice agencies conducted research and analysis on Boston's youth violence problem, designed a problem-solving intervention to reduce youth violence, and implemented the intervention. The research showed that the problem of youth violence in Boston was concentrated among a small number of serially offending, gang-involved youths (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996; Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). The problem-solving intervention that evolved from the research diagnoses focused criminal justice attention on these chronic gang offenders. The well-known Boston strategy to prevent gang violence was implemented in mid-1996 and was associated with significant decreases in youth homicide and other indicators of nonfatal serious violence (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001).

The Boston Gun Project and Operation Ceasefire

Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), BPD and researchers from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government formed a partnership to design, implement, and evaluate an innovative problem-oriented policing intervention to reduce youth violence. Known as the Boston Gun Project, this enterprise involved the following:

- Assembling an interagency working group of largely line-level criminal justice and other practitioners.
- Applying quantitative and qualitative research techniques to assess the nature of, and dynamics driving, youth violence in Boston.
- Developing an intervention designed to have a substantial, near-term impact on youth homicide.
- Implementing and adapting the intervention.
- Evaluating the intervention's impact (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001).

The Project began in early 1995 and implemented what is now known as the "Operation Ceasefire" intervention, which began in May 1996.

Core participating agencies, as defined by regular participation in the Boston Gun Project Working Group for its duration, included BPD; the Massachusetts Departments of Probation and Parole; the Office of the Suffolk County District Attorney; the Office of the U.S. Attorney; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) (juvenile corrections); Boston School Police; and gang outreach and prevention "streetworkers" attached to the Boston Community Centers program. Other significant participants, involved either as regular partners later in the process or episodically, included the Ten Point Coalition of activist black clergy, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Massachusetts State Police, the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General, and others (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996).

Boston Gun Project Research Results

The research activities of the Boston Gun Project provided important insights on the nature of the city's youth violence problem. Project research showed that the problem of youth homicide was concentrated among a small number of chronically offending gang-involved youths. Boston's "gangs" were typically small, relatively disorganized, neighborhood-based groups (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). As many scholars observe, defining the term "gang" is complex (see, e.g., Ball and Curry 1995). Although Boston authorities use the word "gang," it is in some sense a term of convenience, meaning in practice only a "self-identified group of kids who act corporately (at least sometimes) and violently (at least sometimes)" (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996: 158). Thus, what "gang" means in Boston bears little resemblance to what it means, for instance, in Chicago and Los Angeles. This common finding is critical to the analysis and comprehension of gang- and group-related youth crime and violence. The character of criminal and disorderly youth gangs and groups varies widely both within and across cities (see, e.g., Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994).

In the summer of 1995, Boston had 61 gangs comprising only about 1,300 gang members (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). Research on the age distribution of gang members suggests a range between early adolescence and young adulthood (Spergel 1995). Although it is difficult to set upper and lower bounds on the age distribution of gang members in practice, most are between 14 and 24 years of age. According to 1996 U.S. Census estimates, these 1,300 gang members represented less than 1 percent of their age group citywide and less than 3 percent of their age group in Boston neighborhoods with gang turf (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). The small proportion of Boston's youths involved in gangs is consistent with estimates of youth participation in gangs from other cities (Esbensen and Huizinga 1993; Spergel 1995). Project research revealed that Boston gangs were well known to authorities and streetworkers; many gang members were also well known and tended to have extensive and quite varied criminal histories (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996).

Boston gang members were engaged in a wide range of illicit activity, ranging from minor property and disorder crimes to serious and violent offenses. The persistent involvement of Boston gang members in crime fits well with what is known about the criminal behaviors of gang members in other jurisdictions. Gang members are involved in far more delinquent and criminal behavior than their non-gang counterparts (Fagan 1989; Hagedorn 1988; Thornberry et al. 1993) and engage in a wide variety of criminal behaviors, termed "cafeteria-style" offending by Klein (1995).

Boston gangs also congregated in and defended "turf"—very small, well-defined areas within their neighborhoods. Klein (1995:18) suggests that these areas are "the life space of the gang" and that the most important role of turf is that it offers the gang something tangible to identify with and possess (see also Tita 1997). The physical spaces occupied by Boston gangs were typically very small; often, the turf occupied by a particular gang was no larger than a piece of a single street block or the grounds surrounding an apartment building. The total geographic expanse of the 61 gang areas was 1.7 square miles, only 3.6 percent of Boston's 47.47 square miles (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). Turf made up only 8.1 percent of the area of the Boston neighborhoods with gangs—Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park, and the South End (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997). Although these areas were small, violence was disproportionately clustered in gang turf. About 25 percent of incidents involving youth homicides, weapons offenses, simple and aggravated assaults, armed robberies, and "shots fired" calls for service occurred inside these gang areas (Kennedy, Braga, and Piehl 1997).

Conflicts between street gangs have long been noted to fuel much of the youth violence in major cities (Block and Block 1993; Klein and Maxson 1989; Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994; Miller 1977). Law enforcement agencies in different cities use different definitions for "gang-related" crime, which affect the number of gang-related crimes reported. For example, Los Angeles police define homicide as gang related when gang members participate, regardless of motive; Chicago police use a more restrictive definition and classify homicides as gang related only if there is a gang motive evident (Maxson and Klein 1990). In the Boston research, homicides were considered to be connected to gangs if either the murderer or the victim was a gang member and the motivation behind the murder was known or believed to be connected to gang activity. Thus, the killing of a gang member by another gang member in a dispute over contested turf would be considered gang related, as would the killing of a non-gang bystander during the same dispute. However, the killing of a gang member by a non-gang member during a robbery attempt was not considered to be gang related. Although there were relatively few gang-involved youths in Boston, Project research revealed that members of the 61 gangs were responsible for at least 60 percent of all youth homicides in the city (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996).

Chronic disputes among gangs were the primary drivers of gang violence in Boston (Braga, Piehl, and Kennedy 1999). The majority of Boston youth homicides identified as gang-related were not about drugs, money, or other issues for which the violence could be considered instrumental. In fact, only 6 percent of the gang-related homicides directly involved a drug dispute (Braga, Piehl, and Kennedy 1999). Rather, Boston's gang-related youth homicides were usually personal and vendetta-like. This does not mean that vendettas might not have started over drug- or money-related issues; however, if the vendettas had such a genesis, they had taken on an independent life by the time the Boston Gun Project research was conducted. Also, the gang-related homicides largely were not "senseless" or random, at least to the participants. The incidents had a history, however absurd to observers, and the episode was part of a larger history.

Most research on gang violence has found that violent behavior tends to be expressive rather than instrumental (Decker 1996). However, Sanchez-Jankowski's (1991) 10-year observational study of gangs in Los Angeles, New York City, and Boston argued that gangs are purposive organizations and much gang violence is instrumental in nature. The Boston research suggests otherwise for Boston gangs in the early 1990s, and much of the gang literature suggests that most gang violence is typically retaliatory in nature (Block and Block 1993; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Klein and Maxson 1989). In a followup study of East Los Angeles gangs, Moore (1991) cites the following reasons for gang fights: invasion of territory by a rival gang, rivalry over dating, fights relating to sporting events, and personal matters in which the gang is brought in to support an aggrieved individual.

Project research also showed that firearms associated with Boston youths, especially with those in gangs, tended to be semiautomatic pistols, which often were new and apparently had been recently diverted from retail (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996). Many of these guns were first sold at retail in Massachusetts, while others had been smuggled in from out of state (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996). Research has shown that gang violence often involves the use of firearms. Sheley and Wright (1995) found gang membership associated with gun ownership, gun theft, gun sales, gun sharing, and other crimes, and with norms promoting gun ownership and use. In surveys of arrestees in several cities, Decker and Pennell (1995) found gun ownership more highly correlated with gang membership than with drug dealing. Evidence also exists that gang members seek more sophisticated and powerful weaponry than do their rivals. Gang members attempt to acquire numerous guns and greater firepower in the belief that winning the "arms race" will increase their personal protection and reduce their likelihood of victimization (Horowitz 1983; Stover 1986). These qualitative insights are supported by Block and Block's (1993) quantitative research on the increasing use and lethality of firearms in gang homicides in Chicago. Hutson and colleagues (1995) also reported that a major cause of gang-related homicide was the increased use of firearms, particularly semiautomatic handguns.

The Operation Ceasefire Strategy to Reduce Gang Violence in Boston

Research findings and the Working Group process led to development of the "Operation Ceasefire" intervention. Operation Ceasefire included two main elements: a direct law enforcement attack on illicit firearms traffickers supplying youths with guns, and an attempt to generate a strong deterrent to gang violence (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996). The Working Group framed a set of activities intended to systematically address patterns of firearms trafficking identified by the research (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga 1996). These included focusing enforcement attention on intrastate gun trafficking, traffickers of the types of guns most used by gang members, and guns most likely to be trafficked (e.g., new guns and guns with obliterated serial numbers). These enforcement priorities were supported through analyses of results by BPD from comprehensive tracing of crime guns and by the development of leads through systematic debriefing of arrestees involved with gangs or violent crime (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001).

The second element of Operation Ceasefire was the "pulling levers" focused deterrence strategy. This approach involved deterring chronic gang offenders' violence by reaching out directly to gangs, saying explicitly that violence would no longer be tolerated, and backing that message by "pulling every lever" legally available when violence occurred (Kennedy 1997, 1998). Boston gangs were not subjected to increased law enforcement attention arbitrarily nor did the Working Group develop a "hit list" of gangs. Rather, the Working Group's enforcement actions occurred in response to outbreaks of gang violence. In other words, Boston gangs selected themselves for focused law enforcement attention by engaging in violence. When gang violence occurred, Working Group members sent a direct message to gang members that they were "under the microscope" because of their violent behavior (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001). Police officers, probation officers, and DYS caseworkers immediately flooded the targeted gang's turf and communicated to gang members that their presence was in response to the violence. Streetworkers and members of the Ten Point Coalition walked the streets and explained that they wanted the violence to stop and supported the efforts of their law enforcement counterparts to make that happen. They also offered services and opportunities to gang members, including health and social services, educational and recreational opportunities, substance and alcohol abuse intervention programs, and food and shelter.

As Operation Ceasefire unfolded, the Working Group assessed the enforcement levers available to stop violent gang activity (Kennedy 1997). Enforcement responses were tailored to particular gangs and often included a wide range of actions, such as conducting probation checks, changing community supervision conditions, serving outstanding arrest warrants, focusing special prosecutorial attention on crimes committed by violent gang members, increasing disorder enforcement, and disrupting street-level drug markets. A basic premise of the pulling levers approach was to take advantage of the chronic-offending behaviors of gang members. The Working Group recognized that gang members were vulnerable to a variety of criminal justice sanctions and that targeted enforcement actions could be used to good effect in controlling their violent behavior (Kennedy 1997). Although Operation Ceasefire implemented varying enforcement tactics on particular gang members within a group, the focus of the operation was to stop the group's violent activities.

The enforcement actions selected by the Working Group were only as harsh as necessary to stop a gang from engaging in violence. For many gangs and gang members, heightened levels of police, probation, and DYS enforcement were sufficient to end the violence. Quickly shutting down drug markets, serving warrants, enforcing probation and DYS supervision conditions, making disorder arrests, and dealing more strictly with resulting cases as they were prosecuted and adjudicated were generally powerful enough actions to stop the violence. To curb violence among some hardcore gangs and gang members, however, the enhanced enforcement capabilities of Federal authorities were needed. In these instances, ATF, DEA, and FBI investigations, prosecutions by the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the prospect of serving a substantial term in a Federal prison far from home were used to quell the violence.

While carrying out enforcement actions, Working Group members continued communicating with violent gang members. The Group believed it was crucial to demonstrate cause and effect to gang members subjected to the Operation Ceasefire intervention. The Working Group delivered a direct and explicit message to violent gangs that violent behavior would no longer be tolerated and that it would use all legally available means to stop the violence (Kennedy 1998). This message also was communicated to gangs not engaged in violence so they would understand what was happening to the violent gang and why.

In addition to talking to gang members on the street, the Working Group delivered the deterrence message through fliers explaining the enforcement actions and through forums with gang members (Kennedy 1997, 1998). Forums were usually held in a public facility, such as a courthouse or community recreational center. Gang members under criminal justice system supervision were required to attend a forum by their probation or parole officers; gang-involved juveniles under DYS community supervision were required to attend by their caseworkers. Streetworkers and members of the Ten Point Coalition were able to bring other gang members to a forum by persuading them that it was in their best interest to attend. At each forum, representatives of the law enforcement agencies involved in Operation Ceasefire explained their actions to the gang members. Streetworkers and the Ten Point clergy voiced their support of the law enforcement actions, asked the youths to stop the violence, and reiterated their offers of services and opportunities. At the end of the presentation, gang members were encouraged to ask questions on the anti-violence campaign.

The Impact of Operation Ceasefire on Youth Violence in Boston

Immediately after Operation Ceasefire was implemented in mid-1996, the annual number of Boston youth homicides fell markedly. As mentioned earlier, Boston averaged about 44 youth homicides per year between 1991 and 1995. In 1996, that number fell to 26 homicides and further decreased to 15 youth homicides in 1997, a trend that continued through 1998 (18) and 1999 (15).

Although these numbers show a sudden, large decrease in Boston youth homicides, they do not establish whether Operation Ceasefire was associated with that decrease. Thus, with the support of NIJ, researchers from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government rigorously evaluated the effects of Operation Ceasefire on youth violence in Boston (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001). Using carefully constructed time series analysis models that controlled for trends and seasonal variations, the Kennedy School evaluation team found that implementation of Operation Ceasefire was associated with the following monthly numbers for Boston: a 63-percent decrease in youth homicides, a 32-percent decrease in calls about shots fired, a 25-percent decrease in Boston gun assaults, and a 44-percent decrease in youth gun assault incidents in one high-risk district (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001).

The youth homicide and gun violence reductions associated with Operation Ceasefire could have been caused or meaningfully influenced by other causal factors. Therefore, the evaluation team added control variables to the time series analysis models, including changes in the unemployment rate, in Boston's youth population, in violent index crimes, in older homicide victimization, and in street-level drug activity as measured by BPD arrest data (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001). The addition of these control variables did not substantively change the findings. Operation Ceasefire was still associated with significant decreases in the monthly number of youth homicides and other indicators of nonfatal serious violence.

These analyses supported the conclusion that a large reduction in Boston's youth homicide and gun violence was associated with Operation Ceasefire. However, because many major cities in the United States have enjoyed noteworthy reductions in homicide and nonfatal serious violence, the Kennedy School research team also distinguished Boston's youth homicide trends from national and regional trends. Using Supplementary Homicide Report data, the team analyzed monthly numbers of homicide victims ages 24 and under for 29 major New England cities and 39 major U.S. cities. (For a complete methodological description, see Braga, Kennedy, Waring, and Piehl 2001.) Drawing on carefully constructed time series analyses, the research suggested that the significant reduction in youth homicide associated with Operation Ceasefire in Boston was distinct when compared with youth homicide trends in most major New England and U.S. cities.

The Effectiveness of Operation Ceasefire

A central hypothesis within the Working Group was that a meaningful period of substantially reduced youth violence might serve as a "firebreak" and result in a relatively long-lasting reduction in future youth violence (Kennedy et al. 1996). The idea was that youth violence in Boston had become a self-sustaining cycle among a relatively small number of youths, with objectively high levels of risk leading to nominally self-protective behavior, such as gun acquisition and use, gang formation, and tough street behavior, all of which fueled the cycle of violence (Kennedy et al. 1996). If this cycle could be interrupted, a new equilibrium at a lower level of risk and violence might be established, perhaps without the need for continued high levels of either deterrent or facilitative intervention. The impact evaluation suggests that youth violence did indeed settle at a new lower equilibrium after Operation Ceasefire was implemented.

Unfortunately, the Kennedy School research team was unable to collect the necessary pre- and post-test data to shed light on the specific mechanisms responsible for the significant reductions in violence associated with Operation Ceasefire. The research team focused on problem analysis and program development and, a priori, did not know what form the intervention would take and whom the target audience would be. It seems unlikely that the abrupt, large reduction in violence was due to Operation Ceasefire's focus on illegal firearms trafficking. Gun trafficking cases associated with Operation Ceasefire followed the significant reduction in violence rather than preceded it. Most of the guns held by Boston gang members in May 1996 were still held by them several months later, when violence fell to its new, lower equilibrium. Although it may well be that antitrafficking efforts strengthened and prolonged the impact of the intervention, the sudden reduction in violence was not due to a sudden change in the supply of guns to Boston gang members or to the stockpile of guns held by Boston gang members. Rather, that reduction was due to a change in the use of guns by Boston gang members. The principal impact therefore was almost certainly a demand-side, deterrence-based effect, rather than a supply-side effect.

Because the necessary evaluation data are unavailable, it is necessary to draw on the research literature on gang intervention programs to speculate on the effectiveness of the Operation Ceasefire approach to controlling gang violence. As part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) National Youth Gang Suppression and Intervention Program, Spergel and Curry (1990, 1993) surveyed 254 law enforcement, school, and community representatives in 45 cities and 6 institutional sites on their gang intervention programs. From these survey data, Spergel and Curry developed a typology of interventions used to deal with gang problems; they grouped gang intervention programs into four broad categories: suppression, social intervention, opportunity provision, and community organization. Although Operation Ceasefire is a problem-oriented policing project centered on law enforcement interventions, the multidimensional and complex activities of the program fall in all four categories. It appears that the pulling levers deterrence strategy was the key program element most directly responsible for the noteworthy youth violence reductions in Boston. However, other elements of Operation Ceasefire that involved social intervention, opportunity provision, and community organization strategies supported and strengthened law enforcement's ability to reduce gang violence. Beyond deterring violent behavior, Operation Ceasefire was designed to facilitate desired behaviors among gang members. As Spergel (1995) observes, coordinated strategies that integrate these varied domains are most likely to be effective in dealing with chronic youth gang problems. The following sections discuss how Operation Ceasefire program activities in these four intervention categories may have reduced gang violence in Boston.

Suppression

The typical law enforcement suppression approach assumes that most street gangs are criminal associations that must be attacked through efficient gang tracking, identification, and targeted enforcement strategy (Spergel 1995). The basic premise of this approach is that improved data collection systems and coordination of information across different criminal justice agencies lead to more efficiency and to more gang members being removed from the streets, rapidly prosecuted, and sent to prison for longer sentences (Spergel 1995). Typical suppression programs included street sweeps in which police officers round up hundreds of suspected gang members, special gang probation and parole caseloads through which gang members are subjected to heightened levels of surveillance and more stringent revocation rules, prosecution programs that target gang leaders and serious gang offenders, civil procedures that use gang membership to define arrest for conspiracy or unlawful associations, and school-based law enforcement programs that use surveillance and buy-bust operations (Klein 1993).

These suppression approaches are loosely based on deterrence theory (Klein 1993). Law enforcement agencies attempt to influence the behavior of gang members or eliminate gangs entirely by dramatically increasing the certainty, severity, and swiftness of criminal justice sanctions. Unfortunately, gangs and gang problems usually endure despite these intensive operations. Klein (1993) suggests that law enforcement agencies do not generally have the capacity to "eliminate" all gangs in a gang-troubled jurisdiction, nor do they have the capacity to respond powerfully to all gang offending in such jurisdictions. Pledges to do so, though common, are simply not credible to gang members. This study also observes that emphasizing selective enforcement by deterrence-based gang suppression programs may increase the cohesiveness of gang members, who often perceive such actions as unwarranted harassment, rather than cause them to withdraw from gang activity. Therefore, suppression programs may have the perverse effect of strengthening gang solidarity.

Beyond the certainty, severity, and swiftness of sanctions, effective deterrence depends on communicating threats of punishment to the public. As Zimring and Hawkins (1973) observe, "the deterrence threat may best be viewed as a form of advertising" (142). The Operation Ceasefire Working Group recognized that for the strategy to be successful, it was crucial to deliver a credible deterrence message to Boston gangs. Therefore, Operation Ceasefire only targeted those gangs engaged in violent behavior, rather than wasting resources on those that were not. Spergel (1995) suggests that problem-solving approaches to gang problems based on more limited goals, such as gang violence reduction rather than gang destruction, are more likely to be effective in controlling gang problems. Operation Ceasefire did not attempt to eliminate all gangs or eliminate all gang offending in Boston. Despite the large reductions in youth violence, Boston still has gangs that commit crimes. However, the city's gangs do not commit violent acts as frequently as they did in the past.

The pulling-levers approach attempted to prevent gang violence by making gang members choose to change their behavior to avoid consequences that would follow from their violence and gun use. A key element of this strategy was the delivery of a direct, explicit "retail deterrence" message to a relatively small target audience about the kind of behavior that would provoke a special response and what that response would be. In addition to any increases in certainty, severity, and swiftness of sanctions associated with acts of violence, the Operation Ceasefire strategy pursued deterrence through advertising its law enforcement strategy and the personalized nature of its application. It was crucial that gang youths understood the new regime that the city was imposing. Beyond the particular gangs and gang members subjected to the intervention, the deterrence message was communicated to a relatively small audience (all gang-involved youths in Boston) rather than to a general audience (all Boston youths), and it articulated explicit cause-and-effect connections between the behavior of the target population and that of the authorities. Knowledge of what happened to others in the target population was intended to prevent further acts of violence by gangs in Boston.

272

In communicating the deterrence message, the Working Group also wanted to reach a shared moral ground with gang members. The Group wanted gang members to understand that most victims of gang violence were other gang members, that the strategy was designed to protect both gang members and the community in which they lived, and that the Working Group had gang members' best interests in mind—even if their own actions required coercion to protect them. The Working Group also hoped that face-to-face communication with gang members would undercut any feelings of anonymity and invulnerability they might have, and that a clear demonstration of interagency solidarity would enhance offenders' sense that something new and powerful was happening.

Operation Ceasefire was also intended to provide gang youths with a way to save face when confronted with the threat of violence. Youths in inner city neighborhoods adopt street behavior that is often reinforced by their peers (Anderson 1994). Street culture dictates that young men earn respect through tough behavior. Youths may be expected by members of their groups to respond to threats and challenges in violent, expressive ways (Wilkinson and Fagan 1996). Failure to adhere to these "scripts" may result in loss of status and exposure to a greater risk of victimization or isolation from peers (Wilkinson and Fagan 1996). The Working Group recognized these dynamics in conflicts between Boston gangs. A gang that suffered violence had to respond or it would lose status and respect on the street and open itself to further victimization. Operation Ceasefire was intended to give gang youths an "out" from responding violently to these status challenges by swiftly addressing the offending group, eliminating the need for a response and providing the victimized group with a justification for inaction. Victimized gang youths could save face by asserting that the authorities had removed the offending gang youths from the street and that a violent response was unwise, given the increased attention to the current situation.

Social Intervention and Opportunity Provision

Social intervention programs encompass social service agency-based and detached streetworker programs; opportunity provision strategies attempt to offer gang members legitimate opportunities and means to success that are at least as appealing as illegitimate options (Curry and Decker 1998; Spergel 1995; Klein 1995). Boston streetworkers were key members of the Operation Ceasefire Working Group and, along with DYS case workers, probation officers, and parole officers in the group, added a much-needed social intervention and opportunity provision dimension to Operation Ceasefire.

Boston's Mayor established the Boston Community Centers' Streetworkers social service program in 1991. Streetworkers were charged with seeking out at-risk youths in Boston's neighborhoods and providing them with services such as job skills training, substance abuse counseling, and special education. Many Boston streetworkers are themselves former gang members. Gang researchers have suggested that meaningful gang crime prevention programs should recruit gang members to participate in the program as staff and consultants (Hagedorn 1988; Bursik and Grasmick 1993). Beyond their important roles as social service providers, streetworkers attempted to prevent outbreaks of violence by mediating disputes between gangs. If the streetworkers had good relations with members of two gangs in conflict, they would work to settle the dispute between them through separate meetings with each group that would culminate in a negotiation session with key members of both rival groups. Although this tactic was not explicitly used in Operation Ceasefire, Boston's streetworkers used these negotiating skills and relationships with gang youths to support law enforcement efforts to stop outbreaks of violence. Streetworkers also ran programs intended to keep gang-involved youths safely occupied and bring them into contact in ways that might breed tolerance, including a Peace League of gang-on-gang basketball games held at neutral, controlled sites.

With these resources, the Working Group was able to pair criminal justice sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, with help and services. The premise behind this strategy was straightforward: When the risk to drug-dealing gang members increases, legitimate work becomes more attractive; when legitimate work is more available, raising risks will be more effective in reducing violence. The availability of social services and opportunities was intended to increase Operation Ceasefire's preventive power by offering gang members any assistance they might want, including protection from their enemies, drug treatment, and access to education and job training programs.

Community Organization

Community organization strategies to cope with gang problems include attempts to create community solidarity, networking, education, and involvement (Spergel and Curry 1993). The Ten Point Coalition of activist black clergy played an important role in organizing Boston communities suffering from gang violence (see Winship and Berrien 1999). The Coalition formed in 1992 after gang members invaded the Morningstar Baptist Church, where a slain rival gang member was being memorialized, and attacked mourners with knives and guns. In the wake of that incident, the Ten Point Coalition decided to respond to violence in their community by reaching out to youths involved in drugs and gangs and by organizing within Boston's black community. The Ten Point clergy came to work closely with the Boston Community Centers' streetworkers program to provide at-risk youths with opportunities. Although the Coalition was initially critical of the Boston law enforcement community, it eventually forged a strong working relationship. Ten Point clergy and others involved in this faith-based organization accompanied police officers on home visits to the families of troubled youths and acted as advocates for youths in the criminal justice system. The clergy's home visits and street work were later incorporated into Operation Ceasefire's portfolio of interventions. Ten Point clergy also provided a strong moral voice at the forums held to present Operation Ceasefire's anti-violence message to gang members.

Although it was not involved in Operation Ceasefire until after the intervention strategy had been designed and implemented, the Ten Point Coalition played a crucial role in framing the discussion that made it much easier to speak directly about youth violence in Boston. Members of the Ceasefire Working Group could speak with relative safety about the painful realities of minority male offending and victimization, gangs, and chronic offenders. The Ten Point clergy also made it possible for Boston's minority community to have an ongoing conversation with the city's law enforcement agencies on legitimate and illegitimate means to control crime. The clergy supported Operation Ceasefire's tight focus on violent youths, but condemned indiscriminate, highly aggressive law enforcement sweeps that put non-violent minority youths at risk of being swept into the criminal justice system. Before the Coalition developed its role as an intermediary, Boston's black community viewed past activities of law enforcement agencies to monitor violent youths as illegitimate and suspicious. As Winship and Berrien (1999) observe, the Ten Point Coalition evolved into an institution that provides an umbrella of legitimacy for police actions. With the Coalition's approval of and involvement in Operation Ceasefire, the community supported the approach as a legitimate youth violence prevention campaign.

Conclusion

The Boston Gun Project was an attempt to apply problem-oriented policing to one important problem, youth violence, in one city, Boston. The Project assembled a working group with members from a variety of agencies representing a range of law enforcement, social service, and other operational capacities (Kennedy et al. 1996). Typical of problem-solving operations, the issue definition, core participants, and particulars of the intervention evolved over the course of the collaboration. The Project's core operational intervention, Operation Ceasefire, was designed to be effective anywhere in the city where youth violence was a serious problem and was intended to interrupt the cycle the Gun Project hypothesized to be driving youth violence in the city (Kennedy et al. 1996). The pulling levers deterrence strategy at the heart of Operation Ceasefire was designed to influence the behavior and environment of the core population of chronic-offender gang-involved youths the Gun Project research found to be central to Boston's youth violence problem (Kennedy 1997).

The Boston Gun Project applied the basic principles of problem-oriented policing to a substantial public safety problem. Addressing this problem required the involvement of multiple agencies and the community and substantial investments in analysis, coordination, and implementation. The Gun Project experience suggests that deploying criminal justice capacities to prevent crime can yield substantial benefits. Although Operation Ceasefire was primarily a criminal justice intervention, its other elements—social intervention, opportunity provision, and community organization strategies—supported and strengthened the ability of criminal justice agencies to reduce gang violence. The Boston experience suggests that a multidimensional mix of interventions is a desirable way to approach complex and sensitive problems like urban youth gang violence. It is also important to note that Operation Ceasefire did not impose additional costs on the participating organizations, but was implemented by using existing resources more strategically.

The Operation Ceasefire approach worked because it was designed to solve a problem driven by specific local dynamics; however, the targeted activities of the Working Group may not necessarily be effective in other communities. It was customized to the goals of the Working Group, the nature of Boston's youth violence, and the city's capacity to incorporate a strategic intervention. Operation Ceasefire, therefore, is unlikely to be a highly specifiable, transportable "technology." Nevertheless, certain process elements of the Boston Gun Project, such as the central role of the line-level Working Group and the use of qualitative and quantitative research to understand chosen problems, should be applicable to other problem-solving efforts. To the extent that youth violence in other jurisdictions emanates from gangs and criminally active groups, it appears that many lessons can be learned from the Boston experience. Applying the working group problem-solving approach, criminal justice practitioners in other jurisdictions can develop a set of intervention strategies that fits the nuances of their youth violence problem and their operational capacities.

References

Anderson, Elijah. 1994. "The Code of the Streets." *The Atlantic Monthly* May: 81–94.

Ball, Richard A., and G. David Curry. 1995. "The Logic of Definition in Criminology: Purposes and Methods for Defining 'Gangs.'" *Criminology* 33: 225–245.

Block, Carolyn R., and Richard Block. 1993. *Street Gang Crime in Chicago*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. December 1993, NCJ 144782.

Braga, Anthony A., David M. Kennedy, Elin J. Waring, and Anne M. Piehl. 2001. "Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38(3): 195–225.

Braga, Anthony A., Anne M. Piehl, and David M. Kennedy. 1999. "Youth Homicide in Boston: An Assessment of Supplementary Homicide Report Data." *Homicide Studies* 3: 277–299.

Bursik, Robert, and Harold G. Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York: Lexington Books.

Cook, Philip J., and John H. Laub. 1998. "The Unprecedented Epidemic in Youth Violence." In *Youth Violence,* ed. Michael Tonry and Mark H. Moore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Curry, G. David, and Scott H. Decker. 1998. *Confronting Gangs: Crime and Community*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Press.

Curry, G. David, Richard A. Ball, and Robert J. Fox. 1994. *Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping*. Research in Brief. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. June 1994. NCJ 148345.

Decker, Scott H. 1996. "Gangs and Violence: The Expressive Character of Collective Involvement." *Justice Quarterly* 11: 231–250.

Decker, Scott H., and Susan Pennell. 1995. *Arrestees and Guns: Monitoring the Illegal Firearms Market*. Research Preview. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. September 1995. NCJ 184205.

Decker, Scott H., and Barrik Van Winkle. 1996. *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Esbensen, Finn-Aage, and David Huizinga. 1993. "Gangs, Drugs, and Delinquency in a Survey of Urban Youth." *Criminology* 31: 565–587.

Fagan, Jeffrey. 1989. "The Social Organization of Drug Use and Drug Dealing Among Urban Gangs." *Criminology* 27: 633–669.

Fox, James Alan. 1996. *Trends in Juvenile Violence: A Report to the United States Attorney General on Current and Future Rates of Juvenile Offending*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ 170379.

Goldstein, Herman. 1990. *Problem-Oriented Policing*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hagedorn, John. 1988. *People and Folks: Gangs, Crime, and the Underclass in a Rustbelt City*. Chicago: Lakeview Press.

Horowitz, Ruth. 1983. *Honor and the American Dream*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hutson, H. Range, Deirdre Anglin, Demetrios Kyriacou, Joel Hart, and Kelvin Spears. 1995. "The Epidemic of Gang-Related Homicides in Los Angeles County From 1979 Through 1994." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 274: 1031–1036.

Kennedy, David M. 1997. "Pulling Levers: Chronic Offenders, High-Crime Settings, and a Theory of Prevention." *Valparaiso University Law Review* 31: 449–484.

———. 1998. "Pulling Levers: Getting Deterrence Right." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 136 (July): 2–8.

Kennedy, David M., and Anthony A. Braga. 1998. "The Youth Homicide Epidemic in Boston." Paper presented at the Sloan Youth Violence Working Group meeting, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, March 20.

Kennedy, David M., Anthony A. Braga, and Anne M. Piehl. 1997. "The (Un)Known Universe: Mapping Gangs and Gang Violence in Boston." In *Crime Mapping and Crime Prevention,* ed. David Weisburd and Tom McEwen. New York: Criminal Justice Press: 219–262.

Kennedy, David M., Anne M. Piehl, and Anthony A. Braga. 1996. "Youth Violence in Boston: Gun Markets, Serious Youth Offenders, and A Use-Reduction Strategy." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 59: 147–196.

Klein, Malcolm. 1993. "Attempting Gang Control by Suppression: The Misuse of Deterrence Principles." *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* 2: 88–111.

———. 1995. *The American Street Gang: Its Nature, Prevalence, and Control.* New York and London: Oxford University Press.

Klein, Malcolm, and Cheryl Maxson. 1989. "Street Gang Violence." In *Violent Crimes, Violent Criminals,* ed. Neil A. Weiner. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxson, Cheryl, and Malcolm Klein. 1990. "Street Gang Violence: Twice as Great, or Half as Great?" In *Gangs in America,* ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Miller, Walter B. 1977. *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Groups as a Crime Problem in Major American Cities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. NCJ 137446.

Moore, Joan. 1991. *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Sanchez-Jankowski, Martin. 1991. *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sheley, Joseph, and James D. Wright. 1995. *In the Line of Fire: Youth, Guns, and Violence in Urban America.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Sparrow, Malcolm, Mark H. Moore, and David M. Kennedy. 1990. *Beyond 911: A New Era for Policing*. New York: Basic Books.

Spergel, Irving A. 1995. *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach*. New York and London: Oxford University Press.

Spergel, Irving A., and G. David Curry. 1990. "Strategies and Perceived Agency Effectiveness in Dealing with the Youth Gang Problem." In *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications: 288–309.

———. 1993. "The National Youth Gang Survey: A Research and Development Process." In *Gang Intervention Handbook*, ed. Arnold Goldstein and C. Ronald Huff. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Research Press.

Stover, Del. 1986. "A New Breed of Youth Gangs is on the Prowl and A Bigger Threat Than Ever." *American School Board Journal* 173: 19–24, 35.

Thornberry, Terrence, Marvin D. Krohn, Alan J. Lizotte, and Deborah Chard-Wierschem. 1993. "The Role of Juvenile Gangs in Facilitating Delinquent Behavior." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30: 55–87.

Tita, George E. 1997. "Where Violent Gangs Hang Out: An Examination of 'Set Space.'" Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, August, Toronto, Canada.

Wilkinson, Deanna L., and Jeffrey Fagan. 1996. "The Role of Firearms in Violence 'Scripts': The Dynamics of Gun Events Among Adolescent Males." *Law and Contemporary Problems* 59: 55–90.

Winship, Christopher, and Jenny Berrien. 1999. "Boston Cops and Black Churches." *The Public Interest* Summer: 52–68.

Zimring, Franklin, and Gordon Hawkins. 1973. *Deterrence: The Legal Threat in Crime Control*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chapter 10

Developing a GIS-Based Regional Gang Incident Tracking System

James W. Meeker, J.D., Ph.D.
Katie J.B. Parsons, Ph.D.
Department of Criminology, Law, and Society
University of California–Irvine

Bryan J. Vila, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science
University of Wyoming

Acknowledgments

Portions of the projects reported here were supported by National Institute of Justice grants 96–IJ–CX–0030 and 98–IJ–CX–0072; Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, grant 96–CNSX–0019; the University of California–Irvine; the California Governor's Office; Orange County, California; and the Pacific Mutual Foundation. The authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of UC–Irvine Focused Research Group on Orange County Street Gangs research associates Thomas E. Fossate, Ph.D.; Jodi Lane, Ph.D.; Douglas Wiebe, Ph.D.; and Darcy Purvis as well as the support of the members of the Orange County Chiefs' and Sheriffs' Association, the Juvenile Justice and Gang Strategy Steering Committee and its chair, Chief James Cook of Westminster, Marilyn MacDougall and the Project No Gangs staff, and David Hartl, Ph.D.

Abstract

Orange County, California, uses a geographic information system (GIS) to track and monitor gang activity. Called the Gang Incident Tracking System (GITS), it was intended to help law enforcement officials countywide make more informed decisions to counter gang activity, which had been on the rise in the area in recent years. Introduced in 1993, GITS was evaluated to determine the validity and reliability of the data collected and whether the goals had been met. The university researchers who partnered with the Orange County Chiefs' and Sheriffs' Association to conduct the study found that the GITS made it possible to present a reasonably unbiased and complete picture of gang incidents and to establish a baseline of gang activity. Among the components evaluated were the OCCSA's definition of gangs, the form used to collect data, the process by which gang information is reported, the validity of measures used to count gang incidents, the reliability of data coding, and the process for supervisory review of incident reporting. Of particular concern to community activists was whether the police overestimated gang crime. The evaluation revealed that, far from overestimating this type of crime, the police tended to underreport it. The GITS system above all demonstrated the usefulness of multijurisdictional efforts to understand and ultimately prevent gang crime. Output has been used by law enforcement to deploy personnel, allocate resources, and evaluate gang intervention activities. The GITS system has made it possible to use GIS technology to create computerized maps that analyze the spatial and temporal distribution of gang activity.

In recent years, many communities that previously considered themselves insulated from inner-city problems have been forced to acknowledge that gang violence can extend into their own neighborhoods (Curry, Ball, and Fox 1994; Spergel and Curry 1995). Orange County, California is one such community. Located 40 miles south of Los Angeles, Orange County is a highly heterogeneous suburban county with 2.7 million people living in 31 cities and unincorporated areas. Since 1980, it has experienced rapid growth, increasing urbanization, and racial and ethnic change. Despite a few traditional Hispanic "turf" gangs firmly entrenched in its less affluent areas (see Vigil and Long 1990), Orange County historically has enjoyed low crime rates and relative tranquility.

During the past decade, however, gang activity appears to have been on the rise in the county. In 1991, the Orange County Grand Jury reported that gang problems were escalating at an alarming rate, a finding repeated by the 1995 Orange County Grand Jury. According to police and media reports, gang crime in Orange County had become not only more frequent, but more violent. More mobile Asian gangs and white "skinhead" gangs emerged in the county, along with a growing number of more traditional turf-oriented gangs.

Orange County residents have also become increasingly concerned about gangs and crime. A 1994 survey[1] found that 75 percent of residents were aware of gang problems in their community, and 61 percent thought that gang activities had increased in the past few years. In addition, for the first time in 1993 and then again in 1994, the Orange County Annual Survey[2] found that residents considered crime—once an issue of little concern to them—to be the county's most serious problem.

In response to increases in violent gang activity in neighboring Los Angeles and growing public concern with gang activity, the Orange County Chiefs' and Sheriff's Association (OCCSA) established a countywide Gang Strategy Steering Committee (GSSC) in 1992. Joining forces with school districts, local government agencies, community groups, and businesses, the county's 22 law enforcement agencies developed and implemented an unprecedented community-based, multiagency effort to address gang violence.

Since then, following the recommendations of the California State Task Force on Gangs (California Council on Criminal Justice 1989: 37, 57), OCCSA launched a comprehensive set of programs:

- Project No Gangs, a countywide community education and awareness prevention program aimed at mobilizing community resources to fight the influence of gangs.
- TARGET, a suppression program in eight cities in which law enforcement, probation, and prosecution staff target hardcore gang leaders and repeat offenders through vigorous surveillance and prosecution (Kent and Smith 1995).
- The Gang Incident Tracking System (GITS), designed to document the extent of gang-related crime in the county and provide information for strategic planning and evaluation purposes (Vila and Meeker 1997).

Although OCCSA had laid the foundation for interagency coordination and data collection, it lacked the analytical resources and expertise to fully evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of these programs. Early in 1995, OCCSA asked the University of California, Irvine (UCI) to enter into a long-term partnership to enhance its analytical capabilities. In keeping with its tradition of bringing innovative research techniques to bear on important community problems, the UCI School of Social Ecology established a Focused Research Group on Gangs (FRG) within its Department of Criminology, Law, and Society to help OCCSA and GSSC resolve a number of previously unanswered questions about gangs, gang crime, and their effects on the community and assist in the development of strategies to prevent and control illegal gang activity. This chapter will focus on the results of FRG's evaluation of the GITS program.

The GITS Program

The goals of Orange County's GITS were to accurately identify the extent of gang-related crime in Orange County, establish a baseline against which to identify future trends in gang-related crime over time, and determine regional variation in gang-related crime patterns. This information then could be used by county law enforcement agencies to facilitate strategic planning and improve resource allocation for controlling gang activities.

GITS became operational on January 1, 1993, when county law enforcement agencies began reporting all gang-related incidents to a centralized database. By the end of 1993, all 22 independent cities and the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department (which serves contract cities and unincorporated areas) had established relatively consistent internal procedures for identifying and tracking gang-related crime and were reporting to GITS. Training programs and a short training videotape were used to teach patrol officers countywide how to identify and report gang-related incidents to GITS. GSSC declared publicly that the level of gang crime in 1994, as determined by GITS data, would be the benchmark against which the success of future law enforcement gang-control activities would be judged.

To help assure that different agencies collected gang data consistently, the GSSC definition of the term "gang" closely followed that used in California's Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention (STEP) Act:

> [A] group of three or more persons who have a common identifying sign, symbol or name, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the community. (California Penal Code §186.22)

For a crime to be considered gang related, one of the following criteria had to be met:

- A suspect or suspects are identified as gang members or admit membership in a gang.
- A person becomes a victim due to his or her gang association.
- A reliable informant identifies an incident as gang activity.
- An informant of previously untested reliability identifies an incident as gang activity, and this identification is corroborated by other independent information.

Crimes that do not fit the above criteria but have strong indications of gang involvement (e.g., suspects display gang hand signs or the incident fits the profile of gang incidents, such as driveby shootings or home-invasion robberies) may also be included.

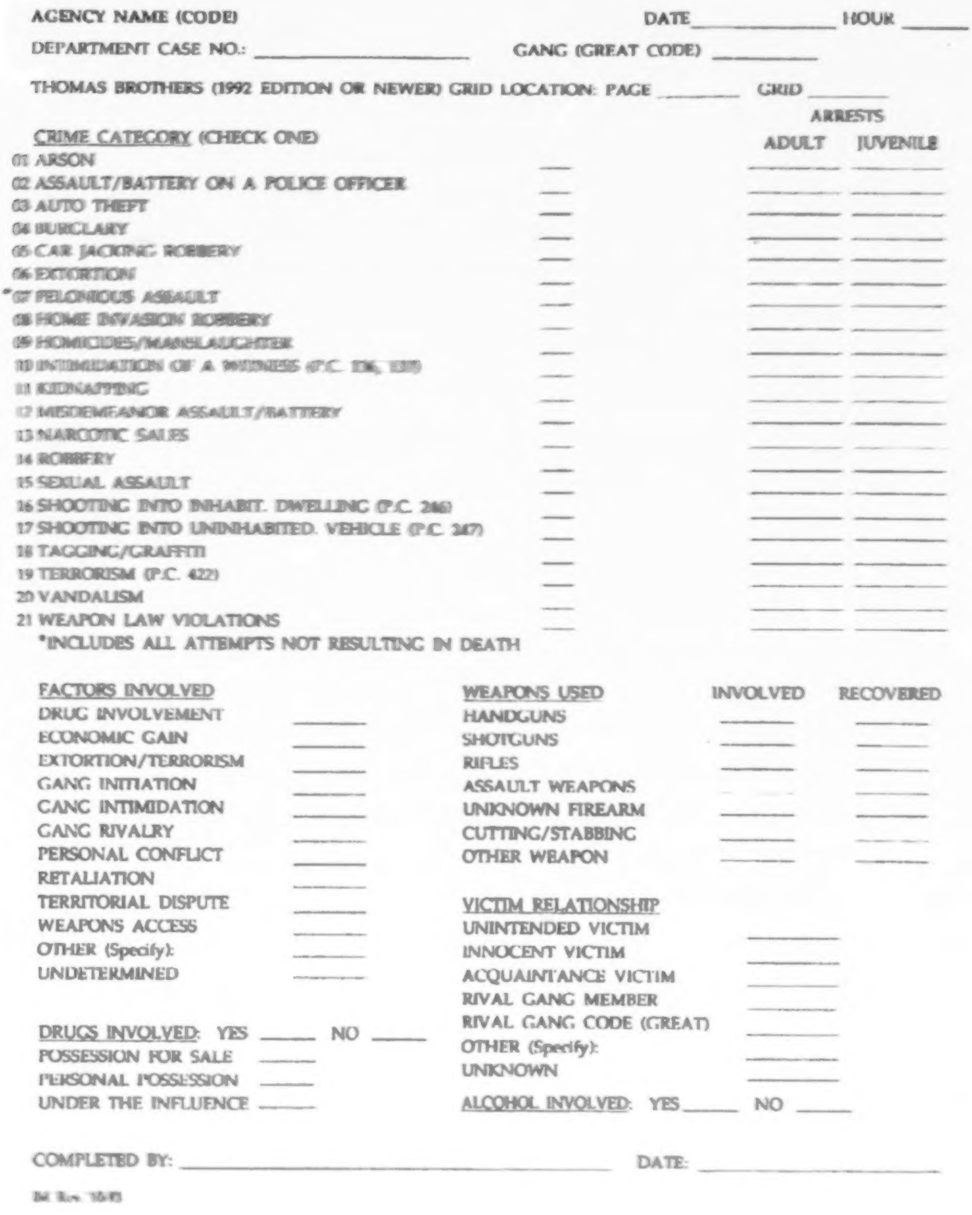
Orange County's definition follows what is often called the Los Angeles or "gang involved" model for defining gang crimes, which is based on the assumption that "the character of an ***individual as a gang member***, regardless of the types of criminal situations in which he or she is found" (Spergel 1992: 137) is what is important for defining gang crime. Under the Chicago, or "gang motivated," model, for a crime to be considered gang related, it must "grow out of gang motivation or interest and enhance the status or function of the gang as a group or organization" (Spergel 1992: 137) and must be motivated by issues of retaliation, territory, recruiting, or "representing"[3] (Maxson and Klein 1990: 26; See also Block et al. 1996: 11–12). The limited research available on this issue suggests that both definitions produce similar patterns in factors associated with the crime (see Maxson and Klein 1990, 1996). The advantage of collecting gang-involved (rather than gang-motivated) data is that these data give law enforcement a better idea of the types of criminal activities that gang members are committing, not only in a group setting but also individually, and allow researchers to compare gang crime with other types of crime, such as juvenile crime. Perhaps the most important argument in favor of the Los Angeles model is that gang-motivated crimes can be obtained from gang-involved data but not the other way around. From a practical standpoint, it is comparatively easy to get gang-related crime data from first reports of officers in the field, whereas the motivation behind an act is often difficult to ascertain. Finally, people in communities with substantial gang problems tend to be more concerned about the crimes committed by gang members than about the motivation for these crimes.

The GITS Data Form

The GSSC created the original GITS data form (exhibit 1), which had several key elements:

- Data collected were acquired from police reports. Each incident in the database could be traced back to its original police report if further information or validation was needed.
- Rough geographical location data were collected for each incident, but at a coarse scale (half-mile squares) that severely limited their usefulness for spatial analysis or program evaluation.
- Only 21 crime categories were listed, many of which tracked offenses enumerated in California's Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention (STEP) Act (CPC §186.22). This limited the ability of the database to measure the amount of gang crime and made comparisons with such measures of crime as the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) difficult.

Exhibit 1: Original GITS Coding Form



AGENCY NAME (CODE) DATE ____________ HOUR ______

DEPARTMENT CASE NO.: ____________________ GANG (GREAT CODE) __________

THOMAS BROTHERS (1992 EDITION OR NEWER) GRID LOCATION: PAGE _______ GRID _______

CRIME CATEGORY (CHECK ONE)		ARRESTS ADULT	ARRESTS JUVENILE
01 ARSON	___	________	________
02 ASSAULT/BATTERY ON A POLICE OFFICER	___	________	________
03 AUTO THEFT	___	________	________
04 BURGLARY	___	________	________
05 CAR JACKING ROBBERY	___	________	________
06 EXTORTION	___	________	________
*07 FELONIOUS ASSAULT	___	________	________
08 HOME INVASION ROBBERY	___	________	________
09 HOMICIDES/MANSLAUGHTER	___	________	________
10 INTIMIDATION OF A WITNESS (P.C. 136, 137)	___	________	________
11 KIDNAPPING	___	________	________
12 MISDEMEANOR ASSAULT/BATTERY	___	________	________
13 NARCOTIC SALES	___	________	________
14 ROBBERY	___	________	________
15 SEXUAL ASSAULT	___	________	________
16 SHOOTING INTO INHABIT. DWELLING (P.C. 246)	___	________	________
17 SHOOTING INTO UNINHABITED. VEHICLE (P.C. 247)	___	________	________
18 TAGGING/GRAFFITI	___	________	________
19 TERRORISM (P.C. 422)	___	________	________
20 VANDALISM	___	________	________
21 WEAPON LAW VIOLATIONS	___	________	________

*INCLUDES ALL ATTEMPTS NOT RESULTING IN DEATH

FACTORS INVOLVED
DRUG INVOLVEMENT ______
ECONOMIC GAIN ______
EXTORTION/TERRORISM ______
GANG INITIATION ______
GANG INTIMIDATION ______
GANG RIVALRY ______
PERSONAL CONFLICT ______
RETALIATION ______
TERRITORIAL DISPUTE ______
WEAPONS ACCESS ______
OTHER (Specify): ______
UNDETERMINED ______

DRUGS INVOLVED: YES _____ NO _____
POSSESSION FOR SALE _____
PERSONAL POSSESSION _____
UNDER THE INFLUENCE _____

WEAPONS USED	INVOLVED	RECOVERED
HANDGUNS	______	______
SHOTGUNS	______	______
RIFLES	______	______
ASSAULT WEAPONS	______	______
UNKNOWN FIREARM	______	______
CUTTING/STABBING	______	______
OTHER WEAPON	______	______

VICTIM RELATIONSHIP
UNINTENDED VICTIM ______
INNOCENT VICTIM ______
ACQUAINTANCE VICTIM ______
RIVAL GANG MEMBER ______
RIVAL GANG CODE (GREAT) ______
OTHER (Specify): ______
UNKNOWN ______

ALCOHOL INVOLVED: YES _____ NO _____

COMPLETED BY: ______________________________ DATE: ________________

[illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Information about characteristics of crime incidents, such as weapons used and motivating or precipitating factors, was collected, as was information about drug and alcohol use.
- Information about victims was collected, but the categories were not mutually exclusive, which made it impossible to code victim data reliably.

After reviewing the original GITS data collection and analysis system, the FRG research team reviewed the 1994 and 1995 data, and address data were added for all these incidents. During this review process, law enforcement agencies were asked to conduct their own careful review of ***all*** police reports involving shootings, robberies, assaults, and weapons-law violations to identify possible gang involvement. This enabled the evaluators to estimate the proportion of the most serious gang crime incidents captured by GITS.

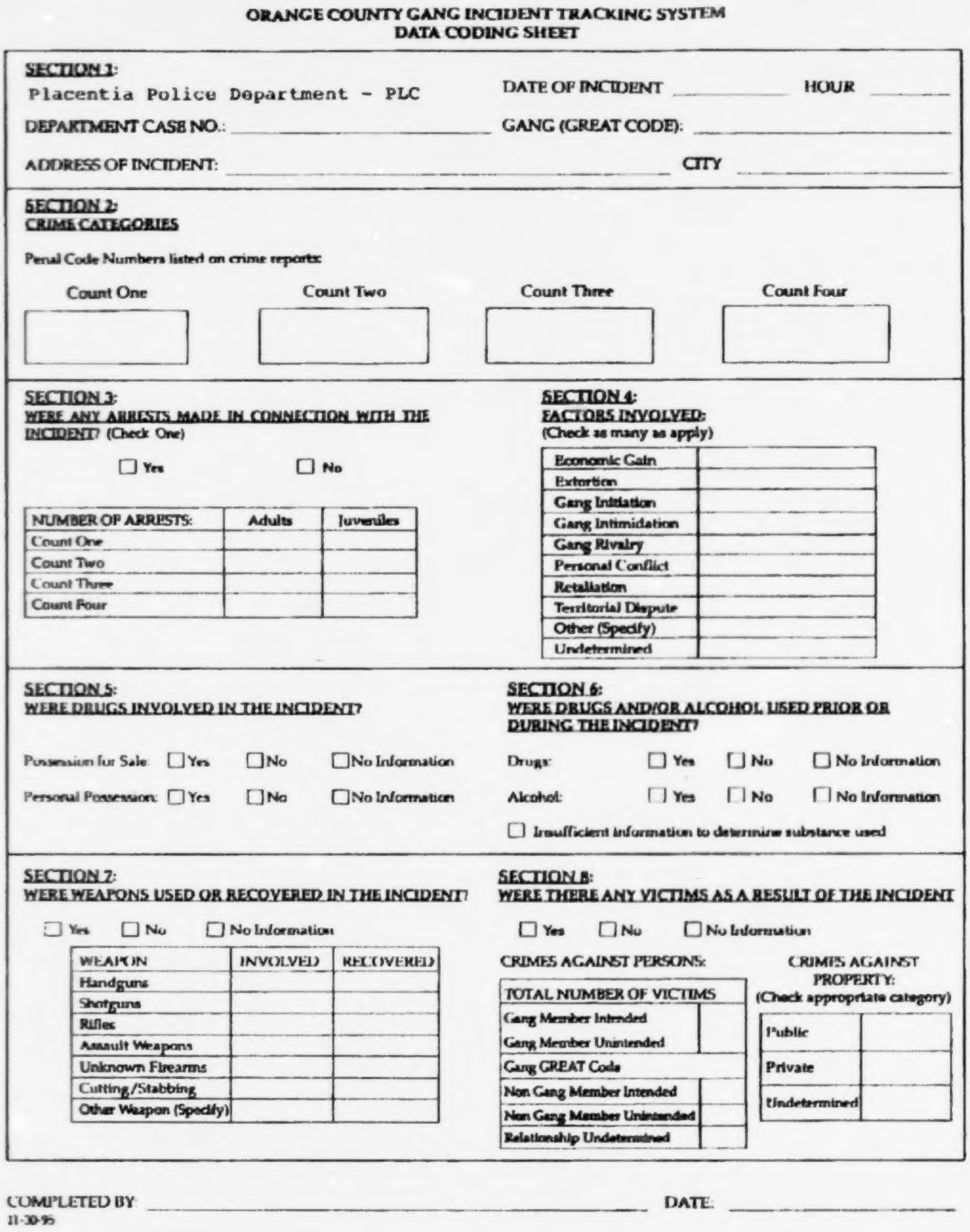
A new GITS data form was developed that corrected a number of problems with the original form; it was adopted for use in 1996. The new form (exhibit 2) is streamlined and reformatted for greater clarity to improve the reliability with which data are coded. It also includes detailed instructions (exhibit 3) and collects more—and more detailed—information than the original. For example, the new form asks for the street address of each gang incident so crimes can be mapped in fine detail, and up to four criminal code violations can be listed as they appear on police reports. The new form also tracks whether victims were gang members and whether their victimization was intentional or unintentional.

Not surprisingly, the gross number of gang incidents reported in 1996 increased by one-third once the system began tracking ***all*** gang-involved crimes instead of being limited to the 21 listed in the original form. Only 3,384 of the 4,500 incidents reported in 1996 fit within the original 21 crime categories. Moreover, capturing data on multiple counts made it possible to collect information on 6,134 gang-involved crimes, whereas the old form would have tracked only 55 percent of these crimes.

The GITS Reporting Process

Information on gang incidents is entered into the GITS database in the following way: When officers indicate on their field incident reports that they believe an incident is gang related, it is reviewed for possible inclusion in GITS by the person in each department responsible for reviewing such

Exhibit 2: Revised GITS Coding Form



ORANGE COUNTY GANG INCIDENT TRACKING SYSTEM
DATA CODING SHEET

SECTION 1:

`Placentia Police Department - PLC`

DATE OF INCIDENT ____________ HOUR ________

DEPARTMENT CASE NO.: ____________________ GANG (GREAT CODE): ____________________

ADDRESS OF INCIDENT: ________________________________ CITY ____________

SECTION 2:
CRIME CATEGORIES

Penal Code Numbers listed on crime reports:

Count One	Count Two	Count Three	Count Four

SECTION 3:
WERE ANY ARRESTS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE INCIDENT? (Check One)

☐ Yes ☐ No

NUMBER OF ARRESTS:	Adults	Juveniles
Count One		
Count Two		
Count Three		
Count Four		

SECTION 4:
FACTORS INVOLVED:
(Check as many as apply)

Economic Gain	
Extortion	
Gang Initiation	
Gang Intimidation	
Gang Rivalry	
Personal Conflict	
Retaliation	
Territorial Dispute	
Other (Specify)	
Undetermined	

SECTION 5:
WERE DRUGS INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT?

Possession for Sale: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

Personal Possession: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

SECTION 6:
WERE DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL USED PRIOR OR DURING THE INCIDENT?

Drugs: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

Alcohol: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

☐ Insufficient information to determine substance used

SECTION 7:
WERE WEAPONS USED OR RECOVERED IN THE INCIDENT?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

WEAPON	INVOLVED	RECOVERED
Handguns		
Shotguns		
Rifles		
Assault Weapons		
Unknown Firearms		
Cutting/Stabbing		
Other Weapon (Specify)		

SECTION 8:
WERE THERE ANY VICTIMS AS A RESULT OF THE INCIDENT

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Information

CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS:

TOTAL NUMBER OF VICTIMS	
Gang Member Intended Gang Member Unintended	
Gang GREAT Code	
Non Gang Member Intended	
Non Gang Member Unintended	
Relationship Undetermined	

CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY:
(Check appropriate category)

Public	
Private	
Undetermined	

COMPLETED BY ______________________________ DATE: ____________
11-30-95

reports. If the review process is working properly (see the section on Validity of Gang Incident Measures, below), every field incident report, including those not marked by officers as possibly gang related, is reviewed again for gang-relatedness. Incidents judged to be gang related are then coded onto

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Exhibit 3: Revised GITS Coding Form Instructions

Prior to starting this form be sure all initial crime reports of a single incident are together. Remember that regardless of the number of crime reports there will be a single data sheet filed. For more complete set of instructions and definitions, see the booklet describing the Gang Incident Tracking System.

All information in Section I must be completed. In all other sections, information must be as complete as possible. 'Yes,' 'No.' or 'No Information' decisions must be marked. Further information is required if a 'Yes' choice is made. Fill in all boxed information. If a choice cannot be made due to incomplete information or it cannot be determined from the information in the crime report, check the 'No Information' or 'Undetermined' box.

SECTION 1:

Date of incident: This should be the date of incident as indicated on the initial crime report. Date should be recorded month/date/year. (Use numerical code for month. For example, incident occurred on October 6, 1995, record as 10/6/95. Approximate date will suffice if actual date of occurrence is not known. Please use the code APR for approximate date. (If it is known that incident occurred between two dates, please use the midpoint.)

Hour: This should be the hour of the incident recorded on the initial crime report. Hour should be recorded in military time. (Approximate time will be suffice if actual hour of occurrence is not known. Please use the code APR for approximate hour. If it cannot be determined what time the incident occurred, record the hour 0000.)

Department Case Number: This should be assigned by your department at the time of the incident. Number should appear on the crime report.

Gang GREAT Code: If gang membership is known or identified, refer to the District Attorney's gang GREAT code list. Select and record appropriate code number. If gang membership is unknown, record code 999. If there is not a gang GREAT code for the identified gang, call Patty Suarez at 935-7037 to receive a GREAT code. (These same instructions for gang GREAT codes apply to Section 8.)

Address of incident: This should be the address listed on the initial crime report as the place of occurrence. The address should be recorded as completely as possible, i.e., numerical, street, and city, (Cross streets will be acceptable if numerical address is un-available.) (The Sheriff's Department will also include Thomas Brother's Grid locations.)

SECTION 2:

Record the crime(s) or penal code number(s) listed on the crime report. If multiple crime reports were involved, list each crime or penal code number from the crime reports. Count one corresponds to the most serious crime connection to the incident. For further information, please see the booklet.

SECTION 3:

Were any arrests made in connection with the incident? Please check either 'Yes' or 'No.' If arrests were made, enter the total number of adults or juveniles arrested per criminal offense in the appropriate box.

Exhibit 3 (cont.)

SECTION 4:

Were any of the following factors involved in the gang incident? Please check all that apply. If none apply, check the factor 'Other' and specify which factor is involved. If it cannot be determined from the information on the face sheet, please check the 'Undetermined' category.

SECTION 5:

Were drugs involved in the gang incident? Please check 'Yes' or 'No,' or 'No information' for both 'Possession for sale' and 'Personal Possession.' See booklet for definitions of factors involved.

SECTION 6:

Were drugs and/or alcohol used prior or during the incident? Please check 'Yes' or 'No,' or 'No information' for both 'Drugs' and 'Alcohol.' If it was known that one of the offenders had taken something, but it cannot be determined which substance was taken, please check the 'insufficient information to determine the substance used' box.

SECTION 7:

Were any weapons used in the incident? Please check 'Yes,' 'No,' or 'No Information.' If the weapon used and/or recovered is not listed, check 'Other Weapon' and specify what weapon was used and/or recovered. In the 'INVOLVED' column, check all appropriate weapon categories. In the 'RECOVERED' column, check which weapons were recovered at the incident. If weapons were not used in the incident, but a weapon was recovered, please mark the type of weapon that was recovered at the incident.

SECTION 8:

Were there any victims as a result of the gang incident? Please check 'Yes,' 'No,' or 'No Information.' In some incidents you will be able to complete both 'CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON' and 'CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY' boxes.

Crimes Against the Person: Record the number of victims per category. If more than one gang member is a victim, please record all applicable codes for victims who are classified as gang members. (Remember if the victim is a known gang member but the gang is unidentified use the code 999. If the gang does not appear on the GREAT code list call Patty Suarez at 935-7037 to receive a GREAT code.)

Crimes Against Property: Select all that apply. See booklet for explanation of the different types of victims.

If any questions arise while completing the data coding sheet, please contact the UCI Focused Research Group on Orange County Street Gangs.

Phone Number ________________ I.D. NO. _____ _____ _____

the GITS form by individuals assigned that task in each department and forwarded to the research team at UCI. There, the forms are reviewed for completeness and potential errors. Forms that fail this screening are returned to the department for correction; those that pass are entered into the GITS database. Once data have been entered, a final check ensures that they were entered accurately.

Plans are beginning to be made to remove UCI from the data-entry and management side of GITS by adding case-management capabilities to a database currently being used to track gang members. This case-management system would also provide basic reports on such data as number of crimes, weapons used and recovered, and victim information. UCI would then be able to focus on more sophisticated reports, analysis, and mapping.

Validity of Gang Incident Measures

Several issues associated with validity were addressed in this project. Since GITS definitions of the terms "gang" and "gang related" followed California law, their reasonableness (i.e., face validity) did not appear to be a serious concern, even though the criteria are broader than the gang-motivated criteria used in some jurisdictions. As discussed previously, the California definition encompasses more information and offers the flexibility of extracting a narrower subset at a later date. Another concern was measurement validity—whether incidents reported by police agencies as gang related actually fit GITS criteria—and whether the GITS system itself met the objectives originally set by OCCSA and the participating law enforcement agencies.

As part of the process of validating the measures, four groups responsible for collecting information on gang-related activity in Orange County were identified. The procedures used by these groups—officers, reviewers, data coders, and records departments or bureaus—were assessed via direct observation, tests, and interviews.

The reliability and validity of GITS data were assessed at four key processing stages:

- At the identification stage, an officer responds to an incident or crime. What the officer sees and chooses to include in the incident report aids in the initial identification of an incident as gang related.

- At the review stage, someone verifies whether previously identified incidents were actually gang related and reviews unidentified incidents for possible gang relatedness.
- Data coding is the final stage that takes place within a police agency. At this stage, a GITS form is completed based on information contained in an offense report or incident report.
- Actual data entry takes place in the FRG office at UCI.

Several threats to validity were identified at the identification, review, and data-coding stages. Internal procedures, gang indicators, and definitions were examined with special care because of their potential to bias results. The primary threats to data-coding validity and reliability considered in the evaluation were inconsistency and the lack of proper training.

After a review of each of the 22 participating law enforcement agencies' reporting procedures, three reporting models were identified that described how gang incidents were identified, reviewed, verified, and recorded: the General Supervisor model, the Gang Unit model, and the Reviewer model. Evaluators tried to determine whether these models differed with regard to the likelihood of either incorrectly identifying a nongang incident as gang related or failing to identify a gang-related incident during the review of incident reports. The biggest difference among these models is in the position of the person responsible for the review stage within the organization (e.g., watch commander, gang-unit supervisor, records clerk). The review stage is critical because GITS depends heavily on the ability of reviewers to identify gang-related incidents accurately.

In all three models, an original crime report may remain in the patrol division or be routed to many different units or divisions in a department; it will be routed to the proper person for completion of a GITS form only if the reviewer correctly identifies an incident as gang related. A strength shared by all models included initial identification by patrol officers who are often highly qualified to determine whether a gang member was involved because they have frequent contact with gang members and firsthand experience with the incident. A second strength was that all models included a review step that attempted to verify the field officer's initial determination and check for missed cases. Weaknesses shared by all three models include substantial variation among officers in identifying incidents as gang related, report distribution and routing problems within departments, inadequate training of data coders, and late submission of GITS report forms.

The General Supervisor Model

In this model, a general supervisor or watch commander who is trained in law enforcement, but generally has no specific training in gang enforcement, reviews all crime reports for gang-related activity and then either completes a GITS data report or forwards the report to someone else to complete the form. The main strength of this model is that the reviewer has the authority to request reports and to require that they be filled out completely and accurately. Its weakness is that it is subject to distributional and procedural problems. General supervisors have other priorities and sometimes fail to apply definitions and follow reporting directions accurately. As in other models, reports are often directed out of the loop by being assigned to other departments before they have been reviewed to determine gang relatedness.

The Gang Unit Model

In this model, a supervisor from the gang unit who is trained in law enforcement and is also a gang expert reviews all crime reports to determine whether any of the incidents are gang related, and then someone in the gang unit completes a GITS data report form. This model's strength is that the gang-unit supervisor has up-to-date knowledge about local and regional gangs. Its weaknesses are that the gang-unit supervisor may not receive all reports to review and that the gang unit may have more pressing matters than reviewing cases and completing GITS forms.

The Reviewer Model

In this model, an outside reviewer examines *all* crime reports for indicators of gang-related activity and completes a GITS form. The reviewer is usually a member of the department's support staff, a clerk, or a cadet. The main strength of this model is that the reviewers tend to do a complete and thorough job. Although the reviewer may not have any specific training, after working with GITS for a time, he or she becomes quite consistent and accurate in review procedures. The reviewer also is the same person who completes the GITS forms. Distributional problems do not affect this model because the review occurs at the place where all reports are usually collected—the records section. The greatest weaknesses of the model are that the reviewers are completely out of the power loop, often have many other responsibilities, and have little, if any, law enforcement training and no specific gang training.

Of the three models, the gang unit model often provides the greatest validity. Unfortunately, GITS responsibilities are often a low priority for gang-unit supervisors, which tends to undermine the reliability of GITS reporting and the timeliness with which reports are submitted. An experienced reviewer who is attached to a gang unit or involved in gang enforcement duties for a prolonged period is more timely in filling out GITS reports than a gang-unit supervisor and, if trained properly, can make equally valid assessments regarding report classification. Therefore, in spite of its inherent weaknesses, more and more agencies are adopting the reviewer model.

Validity Assessment Methods

It was especially important to know whether personnel in each of the reporting agencies understood and applied the administrative definitions of key concepts in this project. Another concern was that internal procedures and directives that affect when an officer should identify an incident as gang related might threaten valid identification by officers. If the administrative definitions were not applied uniformly across jurisdictional boundaries, data from different agencies would not be comparable.

The accuracy and completeness of crime reports affected reviewers' ability to carry out their responsibilities. In some agencies, reviewers were responsible for identification as well as review. Departments designated people for this responsibility in different ways; reviewers included supervisors, cadets, senior volunteers, and interns. The validity of a reviewer's decisions may also be limited because of internal procedures, gang indicators reported by police, and definitions. The reviewer must depend on crime reports and narratives to identify gang-related incidents correctly. Thus, it was imperative to know whether reviewers were relying on officers to check a "gang related" box on incident reports or taking the time to read incident report narratives to obtain clues regarding gang-relatedness. Several research strategies—observation of participants, review of a large sample of police reports, and experiments with data coders—were used to assess how these threats affected GITS reporting.

Observations Regarding Use of Definitional Criteria

Project staff conducted more than 50 hours of ride-alongs with gang unit and patrol officers to assess how officers distinguished an incident as gang related and to identify the reporting criteria they actually applied. Ride-alongs began with semistructured interviews with officers that enabled evaluators to assess the extent of definitional inconsistencies among officers and agencies across the county. Similar interviews were conducted with supervisors and others responsible for review.

Field observations and discussions with police, supervisors, and chiefs indicated a problem with how the definition of "gang related" was applied in various jurisdictions. Although GSSC had officially adopted a "gang-involved" definition, in some cases, officers and jurisdictions applied more restrictive criteria. This became apparent after the report form was expanded to use State Penal Code offenses rather than the original 21 crime categories. Many officers and departments objected to including domestic violence and sexual assault crimes on GITS reports because these crimes were not traditionally considered gang motivated, so few are included in the database. Conversely, robberies by known or suspected gang members are routinely entered even if they were not motivated by gang interests. Although training sessions routinely stressed that the "gang involved" definition was to be used, evidence suggests that it was more consistently applied to the original 21 categories and to crimes traditionally thought to be associated with gang behavior.

These ride-alongs also highlighted other cross-jurisdictional reporting differences, especially for less serious gang-related crimes such as tagging and vandalism. Although more serious violent crimes were reported quite consistently across jurisdictions, jurisdictions with higher levels of violent gang crime tended to be more lax in reporting less serious gang incidents. Jurisdictions with less of a gang problem tended to be more diligent in reporting minor property crimes.

After reviewing the data, no evidence was found to support minority activists' allegations that the police were drastically overestimating the amount of gang-related crime. From 1994 through 1997, the number of gang incidents remained relatively constant—at approximately 3,500 incidents per year (for the original 21 offenses). This is a relatively small number for an area with a population of 2.7 million and is only a fraction of the UCR crimes recorded for these categories.[4]

These interviews showed that records departments were common chokepoints, from which gang-related cases were not circulated to the appropriate personnel or departments for completion of a GITS coding sheet (see Souryal 1981). In particular, cases sometimes were lost because of what Weston

(1978) called "horizontal communication barriers"; gang units, for example, sometimes failed to receive robbery reports because the reports were assigned to robbery detectives and no copy was forwarded to them. This problem could be circumvented informally through "the grapevine," but the quality and amount of information passed along in this manner varied greatly. For example, a gang officer could hear that Joe Smith (a known Alpha gang member) was arrested the previous night by the vice unit. Another gang officer could hear that Ronald Smith (a known Beta gang member) was arrested the previous night by the vice unit. But unless the gang officers followed up on the rumors or the gang unit received an incident or arrest report, GITS would never have a record of that gang-involved incident.

For the most part, only slight differences were found in how officers and reviewers across the county defined "gang" and "gang related" crime. The formal countywide definitions were followed quite closely and, without exception, gang-unit officers could recite them word for word. Posters with the definition were found in report-writing rooms, break rooms, and briefing rooms in each agency. Yet several gang-unit officers expressed the opinion that patrol officers probably did not understand the nuances of the definitions of "gang involved" versus "gang motivated" as well as did experts like themselves.

This perception was troubling because analysis of internal procedures indicated that agency review procedures were often not followed, and an officer's preliminary classification of an incident sometimes tended to have more influence on reviewers than was supposed to be the case. Especially in the larger agencies, where hundreds of cases per day needed to be reviewed for gang-related activity, review was often minimal and limited to cases marked by police officers as possibly being gang related or cases requested by reviewers. Some individuals with review responsibilities were unaware of GITS or of their own role in collecting gang data for their agencies. Limited or missed reviews could result in missed or misclassified cases. The results of the data validation described below, however, appear to indicate that the number of missed cases involving violent and weapons-related incidents was quite small, although there may have been more missed cases involving property-related offenses.

How Incidents Were Classified

Ride-alongs and interviews with patrol and gang-unit officers and reviewers were also used to identify the extent to which internal procedures, definitions, and training affected the internal consistency with which these individuals classified incidents as gang related. Gang officers were asked to explain the criteria (e.g., dress, tattoos, age, ethnicity) they used to determine whether an individual is a gang member (see Piliavin and Briar 1964; Quinney 1970; Smith and Visher 1981). Common descriptors of gang members related by officers and reviewers during interviews and ride-alongs included shaved heads, baggy jeans, tennis shoes, and tattoos. More important than *what* they wore, however, was *how* they wore it. Attitude, stance, and walk were all important supporting indicators. All gang officers who described the appearance of gang members were careful to note that these attributes do not necessarily mean that an individual is a gang member but only give officers a reason to stop, observe more closely, and ask questions. Officers seemed well aware that these types of clothing are quite popular among young people and that juveniles who are not involved in gangs often wear "gang attire."

Supervisors and those assigned to review incidents to identify gang involvement were also interviewed to determine which indicators they employed when screening and reviewing incident reports. These semistructured interviews helped researchers judge whether supervisors and reviewers in different agencies were applying similar criteria. It was found that those responsible for review depended on quick glances at crime reports to classify an incident as gang related and that such classification often required more than one indicator. Supervisors and reviewers looked for such things as the location of the crime (e.g., whether it took place in a known gang area) and clothing descriptions. The names of the suspect and victim also were considered good indicators of gang-relatedness. If gang-unit officers were performing the review, they often quickly recognized the names of gang members. Other reviewers entered names on a crime report in the Orange County District Attorney's Office's Gang Reporting Evaluation and Tracking (GREAT) database, which lists the names and affiliations of known gang members, to determine whether anyone involved in an incident was a known gang member. The modus operandi of a particular crime could also serve as an indicator. For example, driveby shootings and home-invasion robberies were often attributed to gangs. In some departments, suspect description was vital (e.g., if the victim described the suspect as a "cholo" or "gang member type"). Some reviewers also took the time to read the narratives and look for such indicators as admission of gang membership or the question "Where are you from?" which is often asked of strangers by gang members.

Officers and reviewers were found to be quite consistent in the criteria they applied to classify incidents as gang related throughout the county and across reporting models. This consistency may be due to the extensive training that officers receive from the Orange County Gang Investigators' Association and from gang seminars conducted by the District Attorney's Office.

Pre-Evaluation Attempts to Validate GITS Data

Before UCI became involved in the project, a consultant supervised a "validation check" of GITS data for the first 6 months of 1994. Although the process was more of a verification than a validation exercise, a brief description is included here to provide a baseline against which to compare later data quality. Four areas were addressed in the verification: data acquisition, aggregation, analysis, and reporting. Agencies were asked to verify that GITS data reflected both the original tracking form submitted for data entry and original field incident reports submitted by patrol officers, and that the incident fit California's gang-related criteria. No agency was asked to verify more than 30 incidents. The error rate reported was approximately 16 percent. Although the consultant's report did not specify which type of problem contributed most to the errors, subsequent interviews suggest that most of the problems were with data entry. The data were never validated to determine whether police were measuring what they thought they were measuring or whether GITS data provided an accurate measure of the gang problem known to police. Only cases already determined to be gang related were verified; cases that had not been identified as gang related were not rechecked.

Validation of 1994 and 1995 Data

To improve the validity of GITS data and the reliability with which they were reported, UCI evaluators took steps to validate 1994 and 1995 data by examining a random sample of all police reports in participating agencies. After a review of each agency's procedures, a validation strategy was developed for each department. The evaluation focused on the four crime categories—shootings, robberies, assaults, and weapons-law violations—for which the most incidents had been reported up to 1995 in all of the departments. Depending on the size of the agency, the extent of reported gang problems, and the apparent reliability of tracking procedures, agencies were required to review all gang-related cases, review a random sample of all reports within the four crime categories (not just gang-related reports), count all gang-related cases, or engage in a combination of two or more of these activities for 1994 and 1995. The validation was completed in early 1996.

When UCI took over the data collection, the data had not been cleaned or analyzed for 6 to 8 months. Agency staff performed the validation described above with help from project staff. For 1994, 8,295 cases were reviewed and only 283 gang-related cases were found that needed to be added to GITS—at worst, an error rate of 3 percent. For 1995, 4,302 cases were reviewed and only 216 were added—at worst, an error rate of 5 percent. These error rates did not differ significantly by department, type of crime, gang, or any other identifiable variable.

Data Coding Reliability Tests

Researchers sent gang-related incident reports to data coders in each agency who were responsible for completing GITS reports and forwarding them to the research team. As is evident in the original and revised GITS report forms (exhibits 1 and 2, respectively), coders were required to extract a substantial amount of information from each incident report and exercise a good deal of judgment to decide such things as the category of crime, the relationship between victim and offender, and the motivation for the incident.

Experiments devised to test data-coder reliability were administered in February 1996, October 1996, and October 1997. Since the goal of the experiments was to identify and rectify problems, data coders were advised about problems after each experiment and trained to remedy them.

The experiments required that data coders review hypothetical narratives based on actual crime reports and fill out GITS report forms. Each experiment consisted of three narratives, one of which was retained in slightly modified form for all three experiments. The retained narrative was used to test the consistency of individual raters over time. The other narratives varied with each iteration of the experiment and were designed to test for consistency among raters, both within and among departments.

Coders from the same department often found it difficult to remain consistent from one experiment to the next. Much of this inconsistency appears to be the result of substantial turnover among data coders. Not surprisingly, experienced coders were much more reliable than inexperienced ones, and departments with at least one experienced coder tended to be more reliable because new coders were trained by experienced coders. The importance attached to the GITS project by a department also appeared to affect coder reliability: In departments where GITS and gangs were a high priority, coder reliability was high and coders tended to be retained for longer periods; where GITS was a lower priority, coder reliability suffered. Many experimental GITS forms were rejected because they contained errors—on average, 34 percent across the three experiments. A similar proportion of the coders made one or more errors in interpreting the narratives. Most of these errors, however, involved rather minor distinctions in areas of the form dealing with detailed arrest and victim information. On substantive recording issues likely to influence policy, such as specifying the proper crime, time of day, and location, strong reliability was found irrespective of coders, departments, and time.

Improving GITS Data Collection

These experiences with the collection of gang-incident data from many law enforcement agencies in a large metropolitan region highlight the importance of coder and reviewer training and regular retraining targeted at specific problems. Another key problem was the need to increase the involvement of line officers and gang units in data collection. If people in these positions were more committed to GITS, it seems likely that undercounting would be diminished, perhaps substantially. Thus, evaluators found it important to inform line officers and gang units about GITS, how they fit into the project, and how it could benefit them. These groups also needed feedback from the project, something that some chiefs elected not to provide—usually because they either viewed GITS reports as providing strategic management information beyond the purview of line officers or feared that politically sensitive gang information might find its way into the hands of political opponents or the media. The evaluation team's position on this issue was that both research and management imperatives justified increasing the stake that reviewers and line officers had in GITS by making it more useful to them.

The Goals Evaluation

Another important evaluation issue was to determine how well GITS fulfilled the original goals for the program set by GSSC. Such tasks are notoriously difficult to accomplish because evaluators must be more like detectives than social researchers, trying to unearth and sort out the original reasons for the program (Rossi and Freeman 1993: 106). As previously explained, many agencies were involved in creating GITS, including various branches of Orange County's criminal justice system (law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney's Office, and the Probation Department), Federal law enforcement representatives, and local school superintendents. It seemed likely that some of these agencies may have had different agendas in planning and approving a multijurisdictional gang incident tracking system.

Understanding how the goals of these agencies were transformed into the goals for the database was an essential step toward evaluating GITS. Understanding whose goals and whose agenda the committee gave the most weight to was also important. As one of the system's founders explained, "Keep in mind the whole context of this being a compromise all the way around. . . . [A]ll of [the agencies involved] have different priorities. In one respect, I think it is rather remarkable that they all agreed to do something together" (personal interview, July 6, 1995).

The formal goals established for GITS and the goals held by individual participants early in the development process were both examined. Project researcher Katie J.B. Parsons used snowball-sampling techniques[5] to identify public officials who were involved in the initial stages of GITS development and then interviewed them about their expectations for GITS, the goals they believed GITS would accomplish, and their reasons for believing that a gang tracking system was necessary. Interviews were taped and transcribed for later analysis, although interviewees had the opportunity to refrain from being taped for the entire interview or for specific questions that they did not feel at ease answering on tape. Only one interviewee asked to go off the record for some responses. Notes were also taken both as backup in case the tape recorder failed and to provide context for untranscribable portions of the interview. Parsons also made field notes on perceptions or feelings about interviews immediately after they were completed. Other archival materials, including planning documents, research memos, and meeting notes, were also cataloged, inventoried, and analyzed to identify program goals and objectives. This was done to track the evolution of goals and decisions about GITS and its mission.

The evaluation team also critiqued the quality of the goals themselves. GITS has attracted much attention, and several jurisdictions have expressed an interest in adopting something similar. Thus, evaluators believed that it was particularly important to clarify and strengthen goal statements. Nakamura and Smallwood (1980) argue that goals must be clear and specific, because vague goals can be misinterpreted and manipulated. They should also be technically and logically consistent and include detailed descriptions of how they are to be accomplished.

Goal Findings

Nineteen police chiefs[6] and a research consultant who worked on the project before the evaluation were interviewed individually, as were the GSSC coordinator and the District Attorney.

Initially, local police chiefs who had worked in Los Angeles and were familiar with that county's attempts to track gang crime were recruited by GSSC to be involved in the planning process. The original planning committee included these and other chiefs interested in research, gang experts, and representatives from the Sheriff's and District Attorney's Offices. This committee made several limited attempts to discuss the proposed project with Los Angeles and Los Angeles County and other area agencies that were attempting to tackle similar problems, to ascertain what those agencies were doing and what kinds of information they were collecting. Because the committee members were high-level administrators, GITS's goals and objectives reflected strategic and administrative interests rather than tactical concerns. Tactical information was already available to line personnel through the GREAT (later Cal/Gang) system, an investigative database containing information about known gang members. Other GSSC participants accepted these goals and objectives.

Interviews with GSSC participants show that the main goal was to create a comprehensive countywide gang crime database that would help produce a snapshot of the shape, size, nature, and scope of the gang problem in Orange County so management could make more informed decisions concerning such gang issues as personnel deployment, resource management, and informing the public on countywide trends. As one chief stated:

> I think one of the reasons the OCCSA became so involved in wanting to track gang activity was that we weren't sure what was happening around us or why gangs were doing what they were doing. We couldn't respond to our community leaders and residents. We were guessing a lot until we got involved with GITS and other gang initiatives that looked at what was happening and why it was negatively impacting our communities. We recognized that we needed more information to make better decisions. (Chief interview, February 18, 1997)

Written statements concerning the program's overall goal were found in archival materials. The only formal written program description stated that GITS was to function as a management tool to facilitate strategic planning and resource allocation (Smith 1994). Regional GSSC meeting notes suggest that "the purpose of the program [was] to develop a quality database from which we can develop management decisions" (Hartl 1993). GSSC minutes call GITS a "snapshot" statistical profile taken on a monthly basis for management information purposes—***not*** a system for continuous recordkeeping and reporting (Hartl 1994a). In August 1994, GSSC updated the overall county gang strategy policy to include "findings compiled and analyzed for purposes of providing management information to law enforcement officials to combat gang violence and gang activity" (Hartl 1994b).

This goal specifically described the intended uses of GITS and whom it was designed to serve. It also clearly indicated that the database was intended to provide strategic intelligence for law enforcement managers so they could make better decisions. GSSC also discussed whether and how this system could be used by individual gang units for investigative purposes. For example, investigators and middle managers might have used GITS data to decide where to focus gang unit patrols and which gangs to focus on (GSSC interview, March 1, 1996).Yet because the timeliness of data submission varied substantially from agency to agency (many were months late in submitting reports), GSSC members considered the database to be of limited use for tactical decisions requiring up-to-date information.

In early 1993, OCCSA accepted the following series of objectives for the GITS program:

- Establish a centralized database into which all Orange County law enforcement agencies would report gang-related crime.
- Accurately identify the extent of gang-related crime in Orange County by identifying gangs that operate within the county, their membership, and the crime related to their activities.
- Establish baseline data on gang activity against which to compare future trends in gang-related crime.
- Determine regional variations in gang-related crime patterns.

Originally these objectives were taken from several documents and drafted by a consultant to the GSSC based on minutes from several committee meetings (personal interview, July 7, 1995). Other objectives found in the files included a research proposal stating: "The purpose of this procedure is to establish a uniform method of reporting gang related crimes to a central statistical database in order to provide a clear profile of the gang crime problem to Orange County law enforcement agencies" (Smith 1993).

As often happens in real-world planning, formal goals for GITS were established well *after* the development process began. This can be less than optimal because without clearly articulated goals to guide the development process, it is easy for a project to diverge from its original purpose. As the following discussion indicates, however, there was no evidence of substantial problems with GITS goals.

The formal objectives were examined, both on their own and as a group, for technical and logical inconsistencies.

Objective 1: Establish GITS

The first objective was to "establish a centralized database into which all of Orange County law enforcement agencies would report gang-related crime." Although this objective was achieved—GITS was established—it neglected to address an important issue: maintenance of the database. Another minor inconsistency was that not all the county's law enforcement agencies contribute to GITS, because some of them, such as the Marshal's Office, the Probation Department, and the FBI, seldom handle gang incidents.[7] A better restatement of this objective would be to "establish ***and maintain*** a centralized database into which all of Orange County ***policing*** agencies will report gang-related crime."

Objective 2: Determine the Extent of Gang Crime

The second objective of GITS was to "accurately identify the extent of gang-related crime in Orange County by identifying gangs that operate within the county, their membership, and the crime related to their activities." GITS, as ultimately established, tracks only crime related to gangs and the activities of gang members. This objective includes duties that are currently performed by another system. The GREAT and (more recently) Cal/Gang systems are charged with "identifying gangs that operate within the county, their membership, and (more recently) the crime related to their activities." GITS objectives should focus ***only*** on GITS duties and ideally should state: "Identify the extent of gang-related crime in Orange County ***by tracking gang-related crime through official police offense or incident reports.***"

Objective 3: Establish a Baseline for Trend Comparison

The third objective was to "establish baseline data on gang activity against which to compare future trends in gang-related crime." Had this specified the trends to be tracked, it would have been easier to develop reporting forms. It also seems likely that the forms would have tracked fewer types of information—something that would have tended to improve reporting accuracy. Still, the database unarguably has been useful for trend analysis. The research consultant conducted a preliminary analysis of gang-crime trends shortly after GITS began collecting data. More recently, the evaluation team has conducted elaborate statistical and geographic analyses using the data. As the previous sections of this report demonstrate, GITS data make it possible to identify local and regional trends in the nature and distribution of gang incidents geographically and over time. Overall, this objective is acceptable as written, but other agencies may want to consider limiting the scope of their collection to economize and, perhaps, improve reliability.

Objective 4: Determine Regional Variation in Gang Activities

The previous objective required that GITS "determine regional variation in gang-related crime patterns." Gang-related crime patterns refer to groups of gang offenses that share common attributes or characteristics: geographic location, gang identifiers, or crime measures (see Chang et al. 1979). GITS produces countywide information semiannually on crime patterns, juvenile and adult arrests, the relationship between victims and offenders, and weapon involvement. Yet the phrase "regional variation" has proven to be a source of substantial contention among the chiefs of police—and between the chiefs and project researchers. Some interpret "regional" to mean city-by-city analysis, whereas others consider groups of cities or sections of the county as appropriate units of analysis within the region.

If any single issue manages to undermine the astounding level of cooperation among the jurisdictions involved in GITS, it will be the question of how data are to be reported. Members of OCCSA who are most concerned about this issue fear that publication of maps or other data that make it possible to compare levels of gang incidents within or between different jurisdictions could have grave political, economic, and research implications.

Some chiefs are concerned that their cities will be improperly or unfairly compared with neighboring jurisdictions with lower reported rates of gang incidents. Such a comparison, they fear, could have dire consequences for tourism, real estate values, and retail businesses in their cities. They are also concerned that such comparisons would tend to penalize chiefs whose departments meticulously reported gang incidents, while casting a favorable light on those that underreported.

Other chiefs, even several whose jurisdictions had substantial amounts of gang crime, respond that the only appropriate strategy is openness about the extent of the problem. They argue that every analytical tool available should be used to understand the causes of gang problems and determine which strategies under their control are most effective and efficient. As researchers, of course, the authors of this study favor this latter stance, although they are bound by the memorandum of understanding between OCCSA and UCI, which restricts the release of any city-specific data without the permission of that city's chief of police.

Although the fears of inappropriate jurisdictional comparisons have not been realized, the chiefs' unwillingness to be more open with the data has diminished the data's utility. On one occasion, it even prevented the sharing of data between two jurisdictions that were involved in a political conflict. Eventually the conflict ended and the gang data were shared.

It is important, however, to recognize that GITS may never have been implemented if this objective had been stated more clearly, given the various chiefs' widely divergent views on how the data should be controlled. Other jurisdictions implementing similar cross-jurisdictional programs should do their best to develop a compromise acceptable to all participants early in the planning process, to avoid the problems encountered in Orange County.

Expected and Unexpected Benefits

As expected, GITS data were being used by law enforcement to deploy personnel, allocate resources, and evaluate gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities. GITS also provides a measure of gang activity in targeted neighborhoods and enables managers to determine whether programs such as intensive supervision and prosecution have any effect on gang crime. Subregional analyses have also been used by several smaller cities to examine gang crime in their section of the county and help them coordinate strategic activities.

Other unforeseen benefits from GITS were its utility for grant applications and public education. The GITS project helped attract grant funds that supported a number of antigang programs in several cities. "It [GITS] has brought us a tremendous amount of money to work on problems in a very real way" (chief interview, January 29, 1997). Even though GITS was designed to provide a countywide perspective, the data allow city-level analysis. Several chiefs of police have taken advantage of this rich data source by using GITS output to bolster proposals for grants submitted to private foundations and State and Federal agencies. They also have used reports generated using GITS data to educate city councils and citizen groups. One chief said that the data show that the gang problem is not as large as he thought and there is hope that some of its negative effects in his city can be relieved (Police chief interview, January 29, 1997).

Structuring Interagency Cooperation

There are at least two ways to structure interagency cooperation to create a shared database like GITS: from the top, based on a cooperative agreement among the heads of the various law enforcement agencies involved, or from the bottom, based on cooperative sharing of data from those in the law enforcement agencies (usually, crime analysts) who are actually managing and analyzing the data. For ease of discussion, the first will be called the "Chief Model," and the latter, the "Analyst Model." GITS is an example of the Chief Model, while the Regional Crime Analysis System in the Baltimore-Washington area exemplified the Analyst Model. Both have strengths as well as weaknesses.

The Chief Model

When GITS was created, OCCSA already had a long history of interagency cooperation as a forum in which the heads of Orange County's law enforcement agencies met regularly to discuss issues of shared interest. When OCCSA created GITS as a strategic tool to measure the level of gang crime in the county and to plot its variation over time, it declared GITS as a priority for the organization, thus ensuring the cooperation of all members. Absent

OCCSA's clout, it is highly unlikely that all of the law enforcement agencies would have independently agreed to cooperate and create a shared database. With OCCSA behind the project, peer pressure could be used to encourage chiefs who otherwise might not have participated to cooperate. Since there is wide variation in the reporting forms and records-management systems used by the 22 departments, GITS had to rely on their willingness to fill out a separate standardized gang incident reporting form. Only police chiefs had the power to make this happen.

Another benefit of the Chief Model was that OCCSA could speak on behalf of all law enforcement in the county, putting it in a much stronger bargaining position to lobby for external funding from the U.S. Department of Justice and to persuade UCI to provide researchers to evaluate the database. OCCSA's strategy of using UCI to collect and analyze the data lent the database additional credibility and afforded the departments access to more sophisticated analytical capabilities. This was particularly important in the application of geographic information system (GIS) technology. At the beginning of the project, none of the departments had this advanced capability (although more departments are acquiring it) and even today, their ability to use GIS analyses varies widely.

Yet the GITS experience also demonstrated some of the Chief Model's drawbacks. The program's original goal was to create a strategic tool to provide a countywide summary of gang crime. Because different chiefs have different management styles and philosophies concerning access to data, the ability to use the database on a more tactical level has been limited. Not all chiefs have been willing to allow tactical personnel direct access to the data. Because of incompatible records-management systems, GITS relies on a separate reporting form that requires additional effort from the departments. Different departments place different priorities on keeping their part of the database up to date, so timely use of the data is limited. So far, this has limited the reporting ability of the database to twice a year. Because each department maintains control over the use of its data, sharing data among departments requires permission of the respective chiefs. This can cause delays and, in some cases, has constrained analysis. Because officers on the street who collect the data do not have direct access to GITS, their stake in the database is limited. As discussed previously, this issue has the potential to weaken the validity and completeness of GITS data.

The Analyst Model

At the second annual Crime Mapping Research Conference (held on December 10–12, 1998), sponsored by the National Institute of Justice's Crime Mapping Research Center, the Regional Crime Analysis System for the Baltimore-Washington area made a presentation of its interagency efforts to share crime-mapping data. This effort originated with crime analysts in contiguous jurisdictions, who were trying to improve their ability to recognize and respond to evolving crime patterns. This cooperative effort involves fewer than 10 departments, whose analysts send one another updated geocoded crime data formatted according to standards specified by an oversight committee. Although the Regional Crime Analysis System operates with permission of the chiefs of the participating agencies, it is designed and operated by analysts. The system includes the most current data and has been used successfully in the tactical tracking of crimes across jurisdictions.

Yet the Analyst Model's focus on tactical concerns may limit its strategic value. Not all agencies in the geographic area can participate, because not all have the analytical ability to provide data or analyze it in the format required by the oversight committee. The ability of smaller departments without GIS capability to participate is also limited. Because there is no cooperative area wide organization of chiefs to back the analysts' efforts, their ability to secure outside funding and support has been limited. Finally, all the analysis is conducted in-house, so the advantages of outside analysis, such as credibility and expertise, which can be useful for strategic and publicity purposes, have not been realized.

In sum, both types of interagency cooperation have advantages as well as drawbacks and it is clear that how interagency cooperative efforts are structured and evolve affects the utility, flexibility, and durability of such efforts. It may well be worthwhile to combine the strengths of both models in a hybrid approach.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The GITS project clearly demonstrates the usefulness of multijurisdictional efforts to understand, combat and, ultimately, prevent street gang activities. Just as clearly, it demonstrates the value of partnerships between criminal justice practitioners and university researchers. A summary of key findings from this research is presented below, followed by a discussion of interesting opportunities for future collaborative research.

One of the most gratifying findings of this project is that several dozen law enforcement and community agencies can collaborate successfully with one another and with a team of university researchers. OCCSA and GSSC provide an excellent model for regions struggling with the reality that crime is often multijurisdictional in nature. The findings reported here show how this type of cooperative endeavor can benefit practitioners. (As discussed above, other jurisdictions interested in adopting or adapting the GITS system may do so while avoiding some of the difficulties that plagued OCCSA's early efforts.) They also reveal opportunities for fruitful scholarly research.

The GITS database has enabled law enforcement agencies and public officials to identify the nature and extent of gang crime in the county. It also provides them with a useful tool for evaluating gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs. It has enabled them to establish a baseline against which future changes in gang activity can be measured. Moreover, the collection and analysis of the data by the university, independent of direct law enforcement control, helps increase public confidence that policymakers' assessments about gang-related crime are reasonable and accurate. This is likely to help bring more balance to public perceptions of a problem that is often exaggerated. A look at the GITS data shows that the number of incidents has been declining slowly since 1994, along with the number of violent and property incidents (see exhibit 4). Vandalism incidents, however, have been increasing since 1996.

Applying such powerful tools as GIS technology and multivariate statistical analysis has made GITS data more useful. Examples include the preparation of crime maps that make complex statistical and GIS analyses accessible to criminal justice practitioners, elected officials, and the public. The two maps (exhibits 5 and 6) are representative of this type of analysis.

Westminster's Gang Territories and Home Addresses

A map of gang territories in the city of Westminster, based on information obtained by the Orange County District Attorney's Office and verified by the Westminster Gang Unit, is displayed in exhibit 5. (The gangs listed on the map are not the only gangs active in the city, but only the more traditional Hispanic gangs claim territory.) Data from Westminster Police Department

Exhibit 4: Orange County Gang Incidents

	1994		1995		1996	
Incident Category	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Violent Incidents	1,628	45.2	1,599	46.9	1,836	53.7
Property Incidents	492	13.7	425	12.5	235	6.9
Other Incidents	1,480	41.1	1,383	40.6	1,345	39.4
Narcotics Sales	94	2.6	114	3.3	104	3.0
Vandalism/Graffiti	844	23.4	724	21.3	718	21.0
Weapon Violations	542	15.1	545	16.0	523	15.3
Total Reported	3,600	100.0	3,407	100.0	3,416	100.0

	1994		1995		1996	
Incident Category	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Violent Incidents	1,585	48.9	1,421	44.3	1,380	45.6
Property Incidents	207	6.4	197	6.1	153	5.1
Other Incidents	1,452	44.8	1,591	49.6	1,496	49.4
Narcotics Sales	51	1.6	44	1.4	65	2.1
Vandalism/Graffiti	1,025	31.6	1,291	40.2	1,192	39.4
Weapon Violations	376	11.6	256	8.0	239	7.9
Total Reported	3,244	100.0	3,209	100.0	3,029	100.0

field interviews were used to obtain home addresses of identified members of these five territorial gangs. This allowed evaluators to visually compare gang territories with members' home addresses. As the map shows, some gang members live outside their gang's territory—sometimes even in another gang's territory. Most members of the West Trece and Orphans gangs appear to live inside their gang's territorial boundaries, whereas most Varrio Midway City and King Kobra members live outside their territories. This type of visual information can help police departments and researchers understand where territories are located and identify new gang rivalries using hot-spot data.

Home Addresses of Gang Members Contacted in Westminster

A map displaying the home addresses of gang members contacted by Westminster police officers and TARGET teams inside Westminster city boundaries (exhibit 6) highlights the need for multijurisdictional gang efforts.

Exhibit 5: Westminster's Gang Territories and Home Addresses

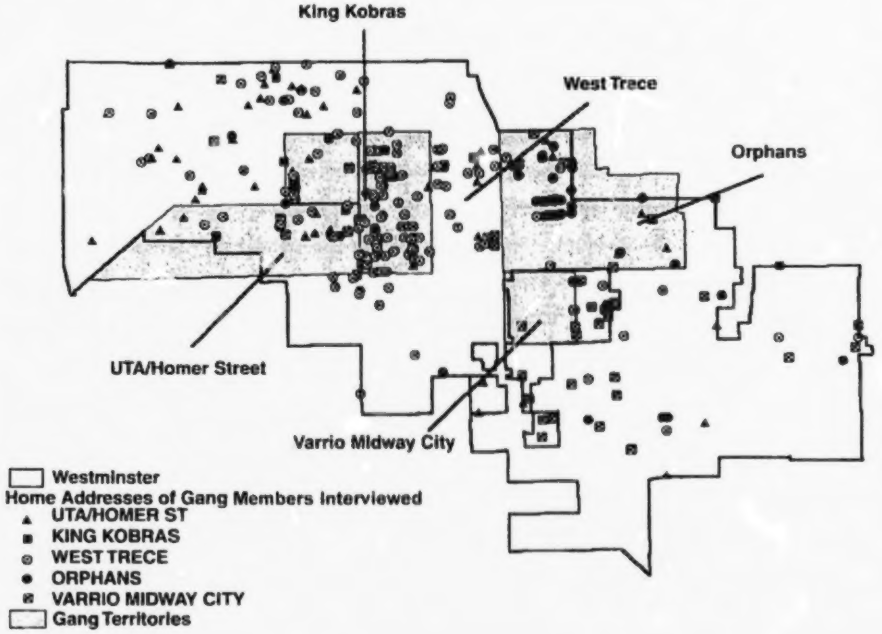
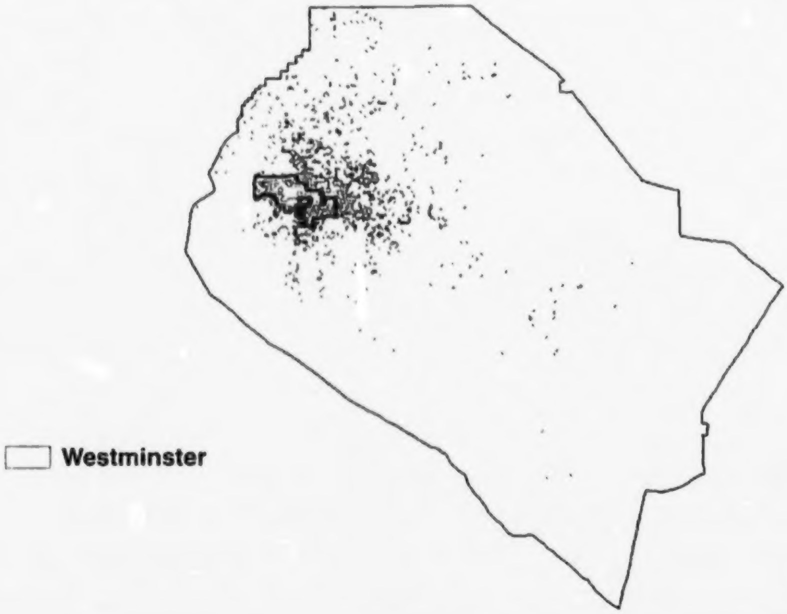

King Kobras
West Trece
Orphans
UTA/Homer Street
Varrio Midway City
Westminster
Home Addresses of Gang Members Interviewed
▲ UTA/HOMER ST
■ KING KOBRAS
◎ WEST TRECE
● ORPHANS
⊠ VARRIO MIDWAY CITY
Gang Territories

Exhibit 6: Home Addresses of Gang Members Contacted in Westminster


Westminster

Note: Dots represent home addresses of gang members.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Gang members frequently cause trouble outside their own communities; some of the gang members who were field interviewed in Westminster had come from 30 miles away. Without countywide cooperation, it would not be possible to ascertain the gang affiliation and past criminal activities of gang members once they crossed into another city. Gangs and their members can move between jurisdictions with little trouble; the gang information system now has that same advantage.

Other Benefits of GITS

GITS also makes it possible to identify spatial and temporal patterns of criminal offending to target resources more carefully (e.g., temporal analyses indicate that "midnight basketball" programs that recently were in vogue are inappropriate in Orange County—and perhaps other regions as well).

Theoretically, the development of geographic and statistical models that can predict more than 70 percent of the variation in violent gang incidents at the census tract level (Vila and Meeker 1999; Fossati 1999) should enable researchers to make much more valid evaluations of gang control programs because reliable and valid gang crime measures can be obtained before and after program implementation.

Geocoded data also have made it possible to compare people's perceptions and fears about gangs and gang crime with the prevalence of gang incidents in their communities. Minority activists and others have voiced substantial concern about whether the increase in gang activity in areas like Orange County reflects biases within the criminal justice system rather than reality (see Collins 1997; Munoz 1997; Schrader 1997; Larkin 1996; Nunciato 1996; Sizgorich 1996; and Lopez and Mirande 1990). Ride-alongs, interviews, field observation, and evaluation of official records, however, showed that law enforcement agencies tend to underreport gang incidents to GITS.

It was also found that the concerted effort to train officers about legal criteria in California for defining gang members appeared to pay off. Contrary to activists' claims, there was no evidence that officers were classifying young people as gang members merely because of their mode of dress, ethnicity, or place of residence when they reported gang incidents for use in the countywide database. On a similar note, the data collected by GITS appeared to present a reasonably unbiased and complete picture of gang incidents handled by the police.

GITS has met the goals set for it by law enforcement managers. Annual announcements by OCCSA regarding countywide trends in gang crime enable the public to judge progress on gang-related issues. GITS data are being used by law enforcement policy decisionmakers to deploy personnel, allocate resources, and evaluate gang prevention, intervention, and suppression. GITS output also has been used by a number of chiefs to help educate local residents and leaders and strengthen requests for additional resources from granting agencies. Finally, GITS reports have helped practitioners keep gang problems in perspective; gang incidents represent a relatively small—if especially troublesome—portion of the overall crime problem faced by most jurisdictions in Orange County.

Notes

1. The survey, conducted for Drug Abuse is Life Abuse, was conducted through random telephone interviews with 600 adult Orange County residents (Mark Baldassare and Associates 1994).
2. A random telephone survey of 1,000 adult county residents conducted annually by Mark Baldassare and Cheryl Katz since 1982 (Baldassare and Katz 1993, 1994, 1995a).
3. Communique from Spergel included information about affiliation, street fights, personal conflicts within gangs, extortion, and vice offenses as gang motivated. (Fax from Irving Spergel, February 27, 1998).
4. In 1999, the FBI's Uniform Crime Report listed 92 homicides, 2,842 robberies, and 5,386 aggravated assaults in Orange County. GITS reported 17 homicides, 687 robberies, and 299 aggravated assaults. Gang crime in Orange County accounts for 18 percent of the homicides, 24 percent of the robberies, and 5 percent of the aggravated assaults.
5. Snowball sampling is a method often used in field research for drawing a nonprobability sample in which each person interviewed is asked to suggest additional people to interview.
6. Interviews were conducted with 19 chiefs of police. There are 22 chief positions in Orange County. Several chiefs have been replaced since the initial interviews took place. No attempt was made to interview new chiefs because their knowledge of GITS was limited.

7. These agencies are part of GSSC but their functions and interactions with gang crime limit their ability to participate. Although they deal with gangs, they rarely handle new gang incidents, focusing most of their attention on following up previous incidents, providing security during court appearances, or offering investigative assistance. Thus, these agencies' data generally are not comparable to police data. The Probation Department is somewhat of an exception; it contributes data that are maintained by GITS in a separate database.

References

Baldassare, Mark, and Cheryl Katz. 1993. *Orange County Annual Survey: 1993 Final Report*. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine. Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

———. 1994. *Orange County Annual Survey: 1994 Final Report*. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine. Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

———. 1995a. *Orange County Annual Survey: 1995 Final Report*. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine. Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

———. 1995b. "The Impacts of Suburban Context on Crime Perceptions, Mobility Fears, and Policy Preferences." University of California, Irvine, Department of Urban and Regional Planning Working Paper #1995–25.

Block, Carolyn Rebecca, Antigone Christakos, Ayad Jacob, and Roger Przybylski. 1996. *Street Gangs and Crime: Patterns and Trends in Chicago*. Research Bulletin. Chicago: Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

California Council on Criminal Justice, State Task Force on Gangs and Drugs. 1989. Final Report.

Chang, S.K., W.H. Simms, C.M. Makres, and A. Bodnar. 1979. *Crime Analysis System Support: Descriptive Report of Manual and Automated Crime Analysis Functions*. Gaithersburg, MD: International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Collins, Jeff. 1997. "Panel to Probe Police Labels of Gangsters." *Orange County Register*. May 25, 1997.

Curry, G. David, Richard A. Ball, and Robert J. Fox. 1994. *Gang Crime and Law Enforcement Recordkeeping*. Research in Brief. June. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, NCJ 148345.

Fossati, Thomas E., 1999. "Modeling Regional Variation in Urban Ecology and Violent Gang Crime." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine.

Hartl, D. 1993. "Regional Gang Strategy Steering Committee Meeting Minutes (November 15)." Unpublished manuscript.

———. 1994a. "Gang Strategy Steering Committee Meeting Minutes (July 28)." Unpublished manuscript.

———. 1994b. "Orange County Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Association Gang Strategy Steering Committee Briefing Points (August)." Unpublished manuscript.

Kent, Douglas R., and Peggy Smith. 1995. "The Tri-Agency Resource Gang Enforcement Team: A Selective Approach to Reduce Gang Crime." In *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Malcolm W. Klein, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Jody Miller. Los Angeles: Roxbury: chapter 25.

Larkin, Patrick. 1996. "UCI Gang Crime Study Called Revealing, but Trackers Releasing Little Information for Now." *Weekender (Los Angeles Times* Orange County Supplement) April 20, 1996, A2.

Lopez, Jose, and Alfredo Mirande. 1990. "The Gangs of Orange County: A Critique of Social Policy." *Aztlan* 19(1): 125–146.

Mark Baldassare and Associates. 1994. "Drug Abuse is Life Abuse Survey: Third Annual Study." Final Report Prepared for Drug Abuse is Life Abuse Foundation.

Maxson, Cheryl L., and Malcolm W. Klein. 1990. "Street Gang Violence: Twice as Great, or Half as Great?" In *Gangs in America*, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 71–100.

———. 1996. "Defining Gang Homicide: An Updated Look at Member and Motive Approaches." In *Gangs in America*, 2d. edition, ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 3–20.

Munoz, Lorenza. 1997. "Gang Database Raises Civil Rights Concerns." *Los Angeles Times*. July 14, 1997, B1.

Nakamura, Robert T., and Frank Smallwood. 1980. *The Politics of Policy Implementation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Nunciato, Christian. 1996. "UCI Gang Study Faces Criticism." *New University News*. October 14, 1996, 3.

Piliavin, Irving, and Scott Briar. 1964. "Police Encounters with Juveniles." *American Journal of Sociology* 70: 206–214.

Quinney, Richard. 1970. *The Social Reality of Crime*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Rossi, Peter H., and Howard E. Freeman. 1993. *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach*, 5th ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Schrader, Esther. 1997. "Minorities Tell of Mistrust, Fear of Police." *Los Angeles Times*. May 10, 1997, B1.

Sizgorich, Thomas. 1996. "Garbage In, Garbage Out." *Orange County Weekly*. July 5–July 11, 1996, 8.

Smith, D.S., and C.A. Visher. 1981. "Street-Level Justice: Situational Determinants of Police Arrest Decisions." *Social Problems* 29(2): 167–177.

Smith, P. 1993. "Gang-Related Crime in Orange County: A Research Proposal." Unpublished manuscript.

———. 1994. "The Orange County Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Association Gang Incident Tracking System: Program Description." Unpublished manuscript.

Souryal, Sam S. 1981. *Police Organization and Administration*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Spergel, Irving A. 1990. "Youth Gangs: Continuity and Change." In *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Vol. 12, ed. Michael Tonry and Norval Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 171–275.

Spergel, Irving A., and G. David Curry. 1995. "The National Youth Gang Survey: A Research and Development Process." In *The Modern Gang Reader*, ed. Malcolm W. Klein, Cheryl L. Maxson, and Jody Miller. Los Angeles: Roxbury: 254–265.

3:9

Vigil, James D., and John M. Long. 1990. "Emic and Etic Perspectives on Gang Culture: The Chicano Case." In *Gangs in America,* ed. C. Ronald Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage: 55–68.

Vila, Bryan, and James W. Meeker. 1997. "A Regional Gang Incident Tracking System." *Journal of Gang Research* 4(3): 23–36.

———. 1999. *Gang Activity in Orange County, California.* Final Report to the National Institute of Justice, grant number 96–IJ–CX–0030, Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice (August). NCJRS, NCJ 181242.

Weston, Paul B. 1978. *Supervision in the Administration of Justice: Police, Correction, Courts.* 2d. ed. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Interviews conducted by Dr. Katie J.B. Parsons:

Personal interviews:

July 6, 1995
July 7, 1995

GSSC interview:

March 1, 1996

Chief interviews:

January 29, 1997
February 18, 1997

About the National Institute of Justice

NIJ is the research and development agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and is the only Federal agency solely dedicated to researching crime control and justice issues. NIJ provides objective, independent, nonpartisan, evidence-based knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of crime and justice, particularly at the State and local levels. NIJ's principal authorities are derived from the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 3721–3722).

NIJ's Mission

In partnership with others, NIJ's mission is to prevent and reduce crime, improve law enforcement and the administration of justice, and promote public safety. By applying the disciplines of the social and physical sciences, NIJ—

- **Researches** the nature and impact of crime and delinquency.
- **Develops** applied technologies, standards, and tools for criminal justice practitioners.
- **Evaluates** existing programs and responses to crime.
- **Tests** innovative concepts and program models in the field.
- **Assists** policymakers, program partners, and justice agencies.
- **Disseminates** knowledge to many audiences.

NIJ's Strategic Direction and Program Areas

NIJ is committed to five challenges as part of its strategic plan: 1) **rethinking justice** and the processes that create just communities; 2) **understanding the nexus** between social conditions and crime; 3) **breaking the cycle** of crime by testing research-based interventions; 4) **creating the tools** and technologies that meet the needs of practitioners; and 5) **expanding horizons** through interdisciplinary and international perspectives. In addressing these strategic challenges, the Institute is involved in the following program areas: crime control and prevention, drugs and crime, justice systems and offender behavior, violence and victimization, communications and information technologies, critical incident response, investigative and forensic sciences (including DNA), less-than-lethal technologies, officer protection, education and training technologies, testing and standards, technology assistance to law enforcement and corrections agencies, field testing of promising programs, and international crime control. NIJ communicates its findings through conferences and print and electronic media.

NIJ's Structure

The NIJ Director is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The NIJ Director establishes the Institute's objectives, guided by the priorities of the Office of Justice Programs, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the needs of the field. NIJ actively solicits the views of criminal justice and other professionals and researchers to inform its search for the knowledge and tools to guide policy and practice.

NIJ has three operating units. The Office of Research and Evaluation manages social science research and evaluation and crime mapping research. The Office of Science and Technology manages technology research and development, standards development, and technology assistance to State and local law enforcement and corrections agencies. The Office of Development and Communications manages field tests of model programs, international research, and knowledge dissemination programs. NIJ is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

To find out more about the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service
P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849–6000
800–851–3420
e-mail: *askncjrs@ncjrs.org*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

To obtain an electronic version of this document, access the NIJ Web site (*http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij*).

If you have questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

MEDIA MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/NIJ
PERMIT NO. G-91

Research Report

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC
Educational Resources Information Center

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☒ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").

EFF-089 (1/2003)